

THIS AMERICAN WORLD

THIS
AMERICAN WORLD

by
Edgar Ansel Mowrer

with a preface by

T. S. Eliot

L O N D O N

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TO MY FATHER

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P R E F A C E

THE national and racial self-consciousness of our time, with its various transformations since the war, has provided the subject-matter for a great number of books of a new sort. The literature of Bolshevism has been followed by the literature of Fascism, and neither of these subjects appears to be exhausted. The literature of Americanism, though never concerned with phenomena of such momentary excitement as the two former, has been steadily accumulating. It is for the most part of two kinds : books written by Americans in criticism of their society, and books written by more or less intelligent Europeans. The first kind varies infinitely, as the names of Mencken, Van Wyck Brooks, Sherman and Irving Babbitt testify ; the latter kind varies from the casual notes of some eminent novelist on a lecture tour, to the conscientious survey of M. André Siegfried. I mention M. Siegfried's

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Saxon " origin which have penetrated the Middle West and the West Coast. The author is the descendant of pioneers. There is much reason in the distinction which he draws in the following passage :

Not to have the frontier in one's blood makes emotional understanding of the United States impossible. On this account Americans divide into two groups, the older stocks and the new-comers. The latter are strong in the cities. They almost monopolize certain branches of our life, they dress, conduct themselves, talk and think like the descendants of old settlers—but they do not feel as they. That is why so much that is admirable in American arts and letters, the work of the later arrivals, does not touch the older stocks, why to the " sixth generation American ", New York often seems as alien as Vienna or Amsterdam.

This statement is, broadly speaking, true, but I should make two reservations : that the new-comers have not all gone to the cities—witness in New England alone, the Portuguese in the fishing industry, and the Portuguese and Italians in suburban market-gardening ; and what is more important, that those branches of the early-settling families which have remained in the East, in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and the towns of the southern seaboard, are further

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removed from the "pioneer" than those whose grandparents moved west. Several subdivisions might be made, to suggest the variety of backgrounds between Americans, in contrast to the general homogeneity of background between Europeans of the same class and nationality. I am myself a descendant of pioneers, somewhat like Mr. Mowrer. My family did not move so often as his, because we tended to cling to places and associations as long as possible ; but with a family tendency to traditions and loyalties, I have a background which Mr. Mowrer would recognize, and which is different from that of the native European and from that of many Americans. My family were New Englanders, who had been settled—my branch of it—for two generations in the South West—which was, in my own time, rapidly becoming merely the Middle West. The family guarded jealously its connexions with New England ; but it was not until years of maturity that I perceived that I myself had always been a New Englander in the South West, and a South Westerner in New England ; when I was sent to school in New England I lost my southern accent without ever acquiring the accent of the native

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Bostonian. In New England I missed the long dark river, the ailanthus trees, the flaming cardinal birds, the high limestone bluffs where we searched for fossil shell-fish ; in Missouri I missed the fir trees, the bay and goldenrod, the song-sparrows, the red granite and the blue sea of Massachusetts. I remember a friend of my school-days, whose family had lived in the same house in the same New England seaport for two hundred and fifty years. In some ways his background was as different from mine as that of any European. My grandmother—one of my grandmothers—had shot her own wild turkeys for dinner ; his had collected Chinese pottery brought home by the Salem clippers. It was perhaps easier for the grandson of pioneers to migrate eastward than it would have been for my friend to migrate in any direction.

Leaving the reminiscences to which Mr. Mowrer has tempted me, I wish to indicate again what seem to me the three principal divisions of his book. The first part, as I said, is occupied with a diagnosis of the peculiar ailments of America ; the second with an investigation of the effect of these maladies upon Europe and the rest of the

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world, and with their European origin ; the third is concerned with the future. It is evident that Mr. Mowrer has been affected by his reading of Spengler ; but he is too reasonable to commit himself either to the pessimistic determinism of Spengler or the optimistic determinism of Wells and Shaw (but the optimism of Wells and Shaw is taking on slowly a darker colour). He recognizes that if one looks far enough ahead, none of these things that are happening seem either good or bad : they are merely change. Our task is simply to see what we are, and to know what we want in the immediate future, and to work towards that.

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INTRODUCTION

I

THE United States of America are an increasingly powerful factor in the shaping of contemporary history. For not only do they enjoy an enviable material well-being but they had the good fortune to achieve spiritual independence and the requisites of material dominion approximately at the moment when world development had reached a point hospitable to their manners and methods. On this account that elusive, composite but vividly real something mankind is learning to call Americanism seems destined to spread over much of the earth.

The relative continental values have, indeed, changed enormously in the past few years. It is not long since educated Europeans considered

it their privilege, or even their duty, to patronize the United States. To-day it is the turn of the European to discover, and perhaps to resent, a similar tone of patronage in American utterances about Europe.

It has been said that as America steadies, its problems will become those of Europe. But it is anything but certain that life in the United States will ever steady to a European model. To the contrary, the problems of Europe and of large parts of the extra-European world as well are becoming ever more similar to those already faced in more favourable circumstances in the United States. It is part of the argument of the present volume, that if there be any civilized morrow to a society rooted in intellectual democracy and plutocratic industrialism, the United States should see it first. If there be none, then the world's hopes must needs rest unsatisfied until the period of Americanism is over.

This elemental situation is unmodified by the fact that most living Americans ignore or deride it. Unbeknown to themselves, the American banker, merchant, manufacturer, politician and newspaperman are shaping the future of their

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own country and of most of the world as well. Yet the American people go about their several occupations in the garments of maturity, but in the spirit of overgrown children, careless, incurious, infantile, resentful of admonition or reproof. There is something almost comic in the homage paid by adult human beings to such immature rulers, as when a crowd of bearded statesmen bow before an infant king. Yet they have some inkling of the might incarnate in the crowned child and it is to his future rather than to his present that their homage goes. In the meantime they seek to realize all possible material benefit from the situation.

To point this statement a few questions are sufficient. Why was it possible for us to be practically ignored by Europe before and in the early days of the war? Why were the Allies able to borrow our overwhelming strength in order to crush the Central Powers and institute a temporary hegemony of their own without making us any sort of adequate political payment? Why were we so soon weary—not indeed in body : we could have carried on the war for several years longer—but in mind? Having apparently ob-

tained the freedom to play in our own back yard undisturbed by flying brickbats, we left our gentle Allies masters of the brick pile. To have removed it altogether would have taken more thought than we were capable of ; to sit on it ourselves, as Wilson wanted us to do, was a bore.

Not because of the "colonial mentality" attributed to us by the British. In our colonial days we were manifestly adult. Not because of any lack of mental equipment. Racially we are as old as the Europeans from whom we spring. Yet if we are not colonials or morons, neither are we that amazing people we imagine ourselves to be. Foreign histories of America do not circulate freely in the United States and would be as unwelcome as our own objective presentations of the national past if they did. But our own accounts of ourselves are calculated to make foreigners smile. In our movies, our newspapers, the reading matter which we call our literature, our political speeches, we pose as a brand-new race of giant stature, issued, like Minerva, full-armed from the brain of some creative Jove, pre-natally tempered in the fires of European

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strife, nurtured on pioneer hardship in the wilderness, possessing innate courage, initiative, zeal, as well as moral standards and love of our fellow-men beyond the reach of effete Europe to emulate. Never was such achievement as ours. In three centuries we have conquered a continent, settled an empire, built such railways and pipe-lines and buildings as the world had never seen, exploited gigantic resources, developed incredible industries, made more money and established a higher standard of material comfort than ever before existed. We provide the means of livelihood for countless masses of men, produce annually God knows how many tons of this and that, including more books than any other country but Germany, and more pork than even Germany can consume. Nor do we neglect the soul. We have founded more institutions of "higher learning" than several European countries, perhaps all of them, together, and have many times as many youthful initiates. All in all, we put out more and better movies, more and cheaper motor-cars, more and worse popular songs, more and vividder religions than the rest of the world put together.

So rings our bid for glory (the kingdom and the power none would deny us). Yet somehow, external plumbing, Hudson tunnels and statistics, do not stand the absolutist's test. In the past, mature men have tended to conceive civilization differently, in terms, say, of political power, Immanuel Kant, post-impressionist pictures, relativity, freedom from prejudice.

Yet it is only when some foreigner raises the matter that we think of civilization as anything more than a synonym for just what we have. Then we reach for our rosary—so many tons, so many miles, so many hospitals, so many dollars, etc. Perhaps we even declare our dislike of European standards. But the foreign mind is impervious to such mathematical or emotional repartee. We began splendidly, of course. Franklin, Hamilton, Poe, were remarkable men. Yet are we not a little stagnant and self-satisfied? Where have we laid the corner-stone for the "great city" prophesied by Whitman?

At this point we are silent. How can we explain that we care nothing for Walt Whitman

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- and are in intellectual matters the most misoneistic people on earth ; that, though we talk a lot about progress, we really prefer to go on being just as we are ? Or that our ideal is not Abraham Lincoln, but Peter Pan, the boy who wouldn't grow up ?

Of course, even to ourselves we do not admit this in definite words. But we confess it by our actions. Wherever the mind is the weapon, we shrink from crossing swords with the adult. We possess a whole school of politicians who urge us to base a policy of abstention from the world's affairs on our incapacity to sit down and discuss anything with mature Europeans without being cheated.

What could better reveal mental inferiority than the tendency of each American diplomat to become "favourable" to the policy of the country in which he happens to be representing us ?

"A nation of villagers," Bernard Shaw once called us. The truth is, we are a nation of adult children, somewhat aware of the absurdity of their condition, but liking it, and striving desperately to avoid becoming anything else.

By immaturity we mean the mental outlook of the ordinary child. A chief characteristic is that the child's world is unfactual. The child does not look back or ahead and "underneath", or reason to past or future from the present; does not pass freely from the imaginary or aesthetic world of make-believe to the world of conceptual realities, purpose, cause, origin, impermanence. The child lives in a world of qualities in which quantity itself is a quality; in a word, its mental life is largely lacking in self-consciousness. Its world is a present world, interesting and aimless. There is no lasting concern with results: the sand-castle that took a morning to build is destroyed with a single kick. Curiosity is large and easily excited, but easily wanes with the flagging attention. The child is indeed as greedy of things as of experiences—what it sees it wants. In the absence of objects it looks further for something to want, and, obtaining it, tires of it.

By nature the child is gregarious and dislikes being alone. Its incompletely individualized consciousness is acutely sensitive to the judgment of

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its fellows and it suffers under disapproval. Therefore it seeks to mix, fit in, please ; and is intolerant of nonconformity. The child enjoys novelty, but honours the habitual and established. And while ambitious to shine, it seeks distinction not by differentiation but by excellence in the general—an excellence of degree, not of kind.

Withal, there is no feeling of class, no snobbishness or silly pride of caste. Mother, the cook, the dustman, the beggar-boy around the corner, the neighbour's puppy, a goldfish, each is accepted at face-value. The child is naturally friendly. It is gullible and generally believes what it is told. Its memory is short.

On this account it possesses a certain faculty of deliberate self-deception. This leads to a sense for and delight in mischief. And to willingness to laugh at itself. Though it adores the flamboyant, the child dislikes pomposity in persons and is cruelly critical.

Years pass. Pain and pleasure become less immediately vivid and more significant. Concepts replace images, causation becomes a material need, purpose begins to shape conduct. The meaning of "necessity" is hammered home.

Work beyond the point of interest, inevitable choice and the dominion of the "either-or", the disappointment of self-identity and the fading of the fairy story, these bring inescapable sadness. Some things fail to repay one's trust, other factors are discovered to be enemies. Slowly yet inevitably, the adolescent learns to take refuge within a "social personality" of deliberate making. Sometimes habit so hardens this shell that after some time, to emerge from it is as difficult as for the mediæval knight to put off his armour. Yet, to the personality within, the shelter from pain is worth the sacrifice of social intimacy.

Not all the intruders, however, are so easily barred. They enter the soul from within. There is sexual desire, almost always a cause of some disturbance. There is moral suffering that cannot be "cried to sleep". Irritating, intolerable thought, thwarted or wasted affections, the consciousness of death. With all these intruders one must somehow come to terms. After a few scars one learns the lesson of acceptance and the possibilities of a more complicated life.

But suppose at a certain point this normal development is deliberately interrupted ; the boy

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refuses to grow up ? His body grows, he works as a man. Marries. Settles down. Begets children. Slaves with his fellows. Yet in his free time shuns adults and plays with toys. What then ?

In his heart, our child-man is at least partially aware that his activities, his mental activities, his mental outlook, do not become his estate. While outwardly he professes complete satisfaction with his life, inwardly he is often, unknown to himself, discontented. The occupations of childhood pall, but he wants to remain the child he has been ; to hold the door shut against those intruders from within, that self-consciousness, that reality, he lacks the courage to face. What he is as an individual, no one can say. Multiply him to the dimensions of a people and you get—modern America.

4

In a great many things we are, of course, really childlike.

Older peoples are somewhat contemptuous of the foot rule. To a seasoned viewpoint, one great man, one great book, one great idea, is

superior to any number of mediocrities. Not so to the great American people. For them, numbers have a fascination. More of this, more of that, bigger than, richer than—such expressions mean something tangible and soothing. What satisfaction we draw from consideration of the number and size of our “institutions of higher learning”! Doubtless some one already knows how far all the students at all the American colleges and universities would reach if placed end to end. But to what lengths they would go if placed face to face in pairs—which is more interesting—even the Government ignores. And the fact that most of these institutions are alkali wastes of the spirit leaves us unmoved; or, rather, moves us not to investigation but to indignant denial.

What we are out for is “progress”. And the progress we understand is measured in numbers.

5

With our delight in numbers goes a lively curiosity. Our interests are simply prodigious—material, emotional, intellectual. In America men

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become passionate over an insignificant Egyptian king. Large audiences consent to be bored to coma rather than forsake the lectures of Albert Einstein. We dote on Coué and become delirious about radio. In fact, we become delirious about pretty nearly anything our "scientific advertisers" sell to us—delirious for a minute. Then our attention flags and our mind trips off into consideration of something else. One day our luncheon club listens to a talk about "Soviet Russian Policy in China" and the next to "Orchids of the Amazon". It does not much matter what we hear so long as, like our dentistry, it is painless. For though active, we are fundamentally lazy beyond words. Really hard work, like persistent thinking, tries us intolerably.

6

The religion of work is no novelty. "*Laborare est orare*", said the monks of Saint Bernard.

"Behold, my heart dances in the delight of a hundred arts, and the Creator is well pleased," sang Kabir, that mystic whose revelation to the Western world is perhaps Tagore's best title to our gratitude.

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We take it differently. Work is with us a " religion " chiefly because we are accustomed to justifying in religious terms whatever we want to do.

7

To the civilized adult, morals, as distinguished from laws and customs, are delicate distinctions springing up in the individual mind in that narrow but important interior region in which he feels himself " morally free ".

To the American, morals are either confounded with laws and with " the social outlook of the community ", or have remained something yet more primitive, a table of don'ts. Religion, says Salomon Reinach, with the blind dogmatism of the rationalist, "*est une collection de scrupules qui font obstacle au libre exercice de nos facultés*". Substitute morals for religion and you express America : the categorical imperative of these States is the inscrutable will of Mumbo Jumbo, the patron of the Y.M.C.A.

That immorality is thus made more attractive is not doubtful : a cocktail has, under Prohibition, all the sweetness of stolen fruit ; drunkenness,

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visits to prostitutes—sordid enough things—become thrilling adventures. Society bans them—and we have deposited our consciences with the mob for safe-keeping ; Mumbo Jumbo forbids them, and he rules the land of a Sunday. Except that it makes immorality more pleasant, there is little to be said for our conception of morals.

To be sure, under our rigorous system of mutual censorship it is possible that we refrain from Sin—are frightened away from Wrongdoing—more often than people in other countries. But we amply make up for it when the censorship is lifted, as our armies in Europe demonstrated. Our self-control is valid under pressure of social conformity. But our true belief is that morality ends where the rum-runner begins—outside the 12-mile limit.

8

American religion is one of the most thrilling wildernesses in the psychological domain and simply defies generalization. Here is nearly every type of credo and practice that whole centuries of history offer, all going on at the same time in a single country. Intellectually and spiritually

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inane as they often are, they are none the less a magnificent guide to the spiritual needs of the people of the United States.

In one sense we are almost Pagan. We do not consider this earth, this century, this country essentially unpleasant. We are in no hurry to push on to another world. For the most part, we are self-satisfied and uncritical. Still, our human state does fall short of absolute blessedness. What we therefore seek is relief here and now. To fill the void formerly occupied by Puritanism, we have invented or taken over a certain number of mystico-materialistic doctrines peculiarly our own. Like most religions, ours are "doctrines of escape", but of escape, not into the future, but into the present, a better present. And to accomplish this, we resort to a hoary device : just as men once escaped some of the difficulties of Papal infallibility by appealing from a badly-informed Pope to a better-informed Pope, so we ask for a revised judgment from our minds and persuade them to change their view of conditions.

By nature we are optimists : though we prate of salvation by work, our fundamental belief is in salvation by Divine Grace, whose springs we

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feel are strong within ourselves. Most emphatically we believe ourselves to be nationally saved, and prefer a collective to an individual salvation. No one ought to pretend to any more Grace than others can. A million are wiser than one. A reasonable moral man can find full self-expression only through a properly nurtured and pruned society. What so well becomes the claws of the bald eagle as a pruning fork ?

9

To know a people you must see them at play. It is by our national amusements that we are judged.

It must be admitted, even by the most stiff-necked of the great American "boobwawzee", that our chief amusements are games, movies, motoring and mechanics, lecture-listening and philandering. Drunkenness and social reform are secondary pleasures and church-going is almost entirely out of fashion. Sport is here classed under games : radio-listening belongs part to mechanics, part to lecture-going ; dancing partakes of sport, of philandering and of a deeper something we prefer to ignore.

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The change that has come over us in this respect since Colonial days is most significant. Our pioneer forbears had few pleasures, but they were adult : asceticism, witch-hunting, Bible-reading, camp meetings, social persecution. Since their time our mental age has diminished.

Compare our contemporary amusements with those of civilized men in all times and countries and you reach a conclusion not altogether flattering to our claim to civilization. Conversation, art, thought, women : these have always been the solace of mature men in society. All of them are virtually beyond us. Of all we are accordingly suspicious.

We have no conversation. We do not exchange views. We either have no views or they are the same for all of us and brook no exchange. We exchange facts out of the newspaper, experiences from our private lives and funny stories from the barber's shop and the smoking-room. Conversation as a joy, as intellectual food, as the subtlest and most thrilling of games, is considered as "pose". Argument, that fine mental training, is held to be offensive, because "everyone has a right to his 'own opinion'" (a thoroughly

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- demoralizing maxim), or useless, since “no one is ever convinced”. Forgetting that not a convinced opponent but a chastened and revised opinion is the aim of spirited argument—the ascertaining if one’s own ideas can stand the hammering of logic and reality impersonated in another and hostile mind.

Art, except in its most rudimentary and sentimental aspects—mass architecture, African rhythm, semisexual dancing, bright colours, happy endings—we do not enjoy. The very existence of an aesthetic world is unrealized, derided or condemned. We leave what art we have to women, and prefer it mild.

Thought we encourage only so long as it centres on external or trivial matters. When it directs itself toward people or ultimate aims, we draw back with a shudder.

- Pursuit of women, love-making, is generally practised in the United States, according to the reformers and the birth statistics. But mostly in exasperating or in disgustingly secretive or in dull ways. Either, coupled with the dance, it becomes abortively orgiastic. Or, in brothels, brutal and sordid. Or, in homes, dully habitual.

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The sexual instincts are not allowed to become really orgiastic and primitive, or openly triumphant, or delicately sensuous, or intellectual and platonic. They are confined to a kind of no man's land, in the back seats of motor-cars parked out in the dark—a source of dissatisfaction to everyone.

So much for our lack of civilized amusements. Consider what we have. We adore games. We show great ingenuity in thinking of new ones : in all we develop great prowess. But on moral grounds we sternly combat the gambling instinct, thanks to which our country was largely settled, because it makes games too exciting. Mere waste of time we do not consider immoral.

Sports we enjoy in a way particularly our own. To certain primitive races sport was a training for war or a pantomime of war. The ancient Greeks cultivated sports for love of the beautiful human body. To the English, sports (called games) seem necessary in the training of character, and are obligatory in all public schools. To us alone, sport is primarily an opportunity to excel. Hence the seriousness with which our athletes train for and win championships.

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- To the non-champions, the armies who bowl and play ball and flock to the golf-courses, sport is a healthful manner of escaping the tedium of the office and the home. Which brings us to the crux of the whole matter. With us amusements, like work, are not positive but negative pursuits whose purpose is not to increase but to decrease the tension of life.

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- The uproar in America over the doctrines of Freud showed pretty conclusively that we are an emotionally repressed people—a conclusion that history confirms. For the most part of Northern, viz., tardily civilized, stocks, we inherited powerful instincts and a desire to control them. These instincts were brought under the influence of the early Catholic Church, whose emphatic asceticism was a welcome antidote to the violence of natural passion in the Pagan Northerners. All through the Middle Ages, so long, indeed, as the Church remained ascetic, our forbears were quiescent ;
- but when the Church turned humanistic, their thirst for the whip drove them out, simply because they were unable to conceive of morality

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independent of external constraint and painful discipline. It is still commonly believed by Americans that anyone free to do as he pleases turns to vice and crime.

This ascetic tendency of the early settlers rested on a purely personal experience and needed no defence. But when, under the influence of the American setting, Puritanism decayed, rational thought became the mainstay to the "religious life". And the arguments adduced in favour of asceticism were certainly not strong enough to prevail over the general trend toward materialism. Either, therefore, asceticism had to yield without a struggle, or the supremacy of thought had to be denied. Aided by democracy, asceticism won. In America thought followed art into the Protestant discard.

We have made of these United States a children's paradise—a land where childhood is sweeter than in other countries. With considerable cunning, for if childhood is to be consciously life-lasting, which is our ideal, it has to be sweet. Americans are absolutely unique in that they place the child's pleasure, comfort and convenience above those of the adult. Other societies have

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- generally gone too far on the other side. We may perhaps feel sorry for little Italians of six or seven doing a day's work in the fields ; or smile at the spectacle of little French boys and girls sipping wine in cafés and listening attentively to their elders' discussion of the " mysteries of life ". In our country one need feel sorry only for the adult.

Not that we spoil our children. That would cause them unhappiness, which is what we are pledged to avoid. We wish them to remain young, or, as we call it, " natural " (with certain adolescent traits deleted), and as care-free as possible, ambitious only to develop into just such examples of mature infantility as their fathers and mothers are.

It is possibly better for children to ignore certain of the ranker components of human nature. So carefully police the shadier walks of life and keep the instincts well out in the underbrush. Chase serious drama from the theatre and movies. Inculcate melodramatic and romantic morality. Keep bright ! Confiscate not only immoral but outspoken and pessimistic books. Censor everything unpleasant. Eschew tragedy. For the sake of the child.

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We cannot prevent our children physically from becoming old. But we can certainly delay their mental maturity. We can keep them intellectually at least two years behind European students of the same age. We can laugh at their efforts to be serious. Laugh at their childish love affairs and prevent their sexual instincts from being prematurely aroused. We can teach them that sex is unclean and that sexual desire (however spontaneous) for anyone but the lawfully wedded husband or wife is degrading. And we almost always preserve appearances. At worst, our moral nature is appeased by the thought that the distrust of sex we inculcate often lasts all their lives and prevents any great enjoyment of "indulgence".

II

The difficulty to-day is in those who are forced to pretend not to grow up. They are tired of childish things ; yet for morality's sake they dare not and no longer know how to cultivate any others, and therefore turn against amusement and leisure altogether.

Because they fear leisure (or can imagine noth-

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ing pure with which to fill it) they tend to work and drink and sedative games. Perhaps the best illustration of their plight is the Sunday newspaper. The average Sunday supplement is really below America's intelligence. But in regions where Sunday golf is unknown or frowned on, or when the weather is bad, Sunday is the Americans' weekly trial. Most of us, once we have slept out, would prefer to return to our ordinary labour. But with work precluded by distance and custom, alcohol lacking or socially disapproved, we turn with relief to the Sunday supplement. For in its reams of narcotic triviality we can bury our boredom. And on Monday life begins anew. Remembering which, we can understand America's hostility to Henry Thoreau, who suggested that the Creator would have done better to make a week with six Sundays and one working-day. But Thoreau, though a Puritan, did not share in the general desire to escape.

Escape from what? the foreigner may ask. Why, from ourselves, our personalities, our instincts and wild thoughts and un-American aspirations, as well as from the very American life we are leading.

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Our endeavour to escape from personality and reality evolves therefore into a thoroughly genuine aspiration toward something "cosmic". This explains the hold of Oriental and pseudo-Oriental religion upon us. For to the Oriental, the ephemeral quality of personality is as unsatisfying as to the European it seems delightful. Only we are too soft for the Vedanta and the harsh conclusions of Hinduism. The Oriental logically denies reality to everything impermanent, the pleasant with the unpleasant. We like our Sunday dinner far too well to treat it as illusion. Therefore we prize doctrines which extol the virtues of a good digestion. The method is the same in all of them. Evil is disagreeable—stick out your tongue at it. Convince yourself that it is not. No need to worry about good. No one wants to get rid of pleasant things (no one but a fool Hindu).

Philosophy—which is the ability to see one's self in proportion—appears only in "a state of society rich enough to afford leisure, civilized enough to enjoy it". Riches we possess—rather more than the Socratic ration of "so much gold as a temperate man and he only can bear and

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carry " (for we are not temperate). We are simply not civilized enough to enjoy the leisure we can well afford. Our ideal is something which will enable us to while away those free hours which else irk us like a diamond bracelet on a baby's wrist.

12

The explanation of contemporary America is really not far to seek. The American masses as individuals are not less intellectually mature than those of Europe. Indeed the later comers are often the most unripe. For this mass of latter-day immigrants was recruited largely from the European proletariat. In their own countries their individual immaturity was not apparent because people of their class in Europe received their civilization with their orders from above. They had reflected, that is, the tradition of their cultured classes. Left to themselves and to win our favour, the new arrivals became more "genuinely American"—that is, immature—than the natives. Whereas in Europe the tone was until lately set by an old tradition and an increasingly sterile but still powerful *élite* which even

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the rich had to placate if they were to escape contempt, in America the masses and their leaders are at one in preferring a society reflecting, not the best individuals, but the normal.

In the absence of recognized tradition, the tone in the United States is set by the really undeveloped masses. Our half-educated, self-opinionated citizens can do what they like, read what they like, think as badly as they like, enforce what mental and moral tyranny they like.

13

And here arises the sad yet crucial paradox. Not despite, but because of their lack of organic civilization the American people seem to-day in a position to impose their mass standards and amusements, material enthusiasms, technical pre-occupations and money-backed opinions upon other more mature peoples.

Yet such a situation ought not to create the impression that the masses of Europeans need to be coerced into the acceptance of Americanism. Whereas the old aristocratic and cultural *élite* and some of the social radicals bitterly resent American plutocratic ideals and standardized

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mediocracy, the masses in Europe fall ready victims to the lures of American life. This life, lifted from its social setting in the United States, is often grotesque. But its material benefits loom so luscious that it would take more abnegation than impoverished Europe possesses to refuse them.

Moreover, European society displays a tendency that is almost a determination to remodel itself along American lines. The older values are falling into desuetude. The newer leaders, industrialists, financiers, politicians, recruited as often as not from the European periphery, possess no more cultural tradition or cultural interest than their American prototypes. Democratic ideology, machine technique, humanitarian materialism, were all products of the European mind, and standardization follows naturally in their train. With the instincts of Polynesian cannibals these latest children of old Europe have devoured the parental culture that engendered them. Unless it can surprise the world by some brilliant revival, Europe's older organic society is moribund. Its dying would leave the same problems earlier posed in the United States.

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Thanks to the historical accidents of isolation, frontier society and natural riches, the Euro-American people in the United States became more adequately equipped for the new type of life than those who remained in the Old Country. Immersed in the new continent, these ancient stocks developed that powerful puerility, clever mastery of machinery, gregarious adoration of numbers and standardization, mass anonymity, which make for almost violent efficiency in this disillusioned yet marvellously organized modern world.

The last requisite of acknowledged dominion, prestige, was poured over the United States by the same war that in pulling down the older social structure in Europe, created the need for the new. This prestige, however meretriciously gained, is threatened only by the revolutionary magnetism of Soviet Russia. But with Russia excluded by its own cultural character from Euro-American civilization, leadership within that civilization may well accrue to the American people.

Unhampered by much cultural tradition or by the finer scruples, mighty in the increment of a continent tamed by a science he understands

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supremely to exploit, fresh with the faith of unbroken successes, directed by mass motives inherited from pioneer fellowship in a primeval waste, sole beneficiary of the most destructive of all wars, drawn by spiritual vacuum and capital scarcity elsewhere, our citizen goes forth blithely to reap the profits (and incidentally, spread the benefits) he has learned most to cherish. Mental democracy and machine organization triumph, and in the process Babbitt buys the world.

I

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I

IT was the frontier that made the United States unique. Pioneer experience drew the distance separating us from the mother countries. Less than three hundred years comparative isolation on a rich and all but empty continent transformed traditional European stocks, though steadily recruited, into a people new in spirit and surprisingly homogeneous, with habits, emotions, thoughts, capacities, organization and even a physique of their own.

Europe at a certain moment was too small and too poor and too intolerant for the boldest and most fanatical of her inhabitants, who left the "old country" for the "new country"—expressions I learned first from the foreign-born occupants of our household kitchen. Of all these

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early emigrants from Europe the finest chose the temperate region of middle North America, and became our ancestors. The adventurous character they brought became steeled in the piety and hardship of frontier life. Starting at the Atlantic coast, they gradually drove westward to the other ocean : not an inch of our soil but has at one time or another been frontier. Where the first settlers passed, they quickened the land in their going. Where they lived and struggled against recalcitrant nature and more recalcitrant natives, future generations were born with altered mind and feeling. The result was the American spirit.

It is a gay story and a great one. Strange to say, unlike most that is taught to us in childhood, it is, sobered of its hyperbole, substantially true.

2

As a student in Paris, I first realized what " old country " meant. I had read much of Europe and Europe's history, but I shall not forget that first winter afternoon when, in the sinking twilight, I walked along the Seine from Passy and happened into the *Place de la Concorde*.

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For that was civilization—the first I had ever seen.

Perhaps my emotion ought to have revealed to me the suppressed wish of my generation. As a matter of fact, the revelation came only years later when I visited the Washington Homestead in Mount Vernon.

For deep in our racial souls, and again by most of our formal education, we Americans are a prolongation of Europe. The early colonists brought civilization with them. Their bodies laboured to subdue the wild lands they had settled, but their minds were continually playing back and forth across the Atlantic.

The dominant tradition in early America was English. The English gave us most of our early population and our language. Through them we inherited Puritanism, with its curiously practical combination of moral zeal and moral compromise. From England we took over our first culture.

English culture was, however, essentially aristocratic. The leading spirits of Colonial days were utterly unlike our contemporary leaders. In breadth of vision these men were not inferior to their European contemporaries. With few excep-

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tions, they were familiar with the best thought of their time in England and in France, and sympathetic to it. Under their guidance the new country was almost immediately internationally efficient, something it is slowly re-learning, under pressure of events.

All this was more or less apparent in the Mount Vernon Homestead. The house and grounds, with their appropriate furniture, all of a piece, at once simple and prosperous, represented something that the United States have never since been able to produce. Mount Vernon was Europe transplanted to America, as Syracuse remained Grecian, though in Italy. Mount Vernon was itself civilization, proving thereby that the early settlers had been civilized Europeans.

The winning of the West transformed the type of governing class. The primitive struggle focused the attention narrowly on our own country, put a premium on new virtues and developed a new outlook. In the raw frontier society Puritanism was useful and survived, while culture was superfluous and perished. The new life gave money and power to the boldest pioneers and children of pioneers. Not mature thought, but youthful

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strength, courage, physical vitality, optimism, with a dash of unscrupulousness, led to success. When, after the Civil War, the South ceased to count in anything but statistics and elections, the aristocratic tradition of culture was dead.

So long as the colonists remained on the Atlantic seaboard and kept their vivid spiritual ties with the old country, they were part of Europe. When they pushed into the interior they severed their connexion, more particularly after the political ties were cut by the successful Revolution. The coastal zone, continually supported by fresh immigrants, did manage to preserve something of its European character until it was submerged in the undertow of the great pioneering wave that swept westward. When the physical frontier finally ceased to be, it was found that its spirit, the state of mind induced by its characteristic form of living, had moulded a people. Our life is defined at its basis by pioneer traditions. This is as true of cosmopolitan New York and fashionable Palm Beach as of Peoria or Gary. The spirit of the frontier is the spirit of modern America.

Yet the longing for something symbolized by

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- Europe never quite abated, perhaps because man is a civilizing being, and we hankered subconsciously for the only civilization our race had known and on whose crumbs we were continually though sparingly nourished. When this longing became conscious, it showed that the pioneer wave that started from Europe four centuries ago had turned, and that the great ebb had begun.

3

- Which can be explained autobiographically. I am of typically American descent and family. That is to say, my ancestors were of English, Scotch, Irish, German and Dutch origin. Like most Americans, I have never had a home. At the age of six I was moved from the Central Illinois corn belt to Chicago, growing up on the half suburban South Side. I tore my stockings on the sand burs in acres of vacant lots, swam in Lake Michigan from the old wooden breakwater, played golf in Jackson Park, familiarized myself with miles of territory. Yet I never became
- permanently attached to Chicago. I could not. We never stayed long enough in any one place. In eleven years we lived in five buildings in as

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many parts of the town. I attended six different schools.

And then, the town itself moved as rapidly as we. Not only centrifugally. Inwardly. It changed its appearance from year to year. By the time familiarity had made me love some street or district, people came along and changed it all, tearing down and rebuilding. The neighbourhood had "changed character", my mother said. Therefore we had to move. I wanted to stay. Or rather, I should have wanted to stay if only the old red brick flat buildings with the dark stairways had been preserved from the vandal improvers ; if only the vacant lots had not been filled up and the wooden sidewalks which floated about so amusingly on the spring floods had been respected. My mother accused me of misoneism. She believed in change and progress : I was "old-fashioned". Really it was the other way about. I craved a new stability : she was at home as part of the movement westward.

4

And what a movement it had been ! Four centuries ago the heart of Europe overflowed,

and the excess blood was, in a great contraction, driven to the ends of the earth. South, east, southwest and west it went, but mostly west—following the sun. What did the first rovers want? Almost as many things as they were individuals. We speak of the new interest in the physical earth, of humanism, the release from doctrinal fetters, greed, love of adventure, revival of learning, economic distress. All true; but insufficient. These things do not tell why the priests and soldiers and adventurers and merchants went forth just then, nor why the many followed them. What men they were, these first! Something in them dignified their very brutality and greed, and made them not so much pirates as *condottieri* of the sea and wilderness.

De Soto, Cortez, Pizarro, Coronado; Champlain, Joliet, Magellan and Da Gama; Drake and Hawkins—how they came and with what vitality! What a pity their chronicles are so meagre and so rare. An ambitious fabulist like Ossendowsky strings legend and hearsay and personal adventure together—and the world devours his works. But if he had done half again

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as much as he wrote, what would his achievement have been beside the adventures of Cortez? Gold-seekers and scoundrels, half helpless in a world that to them knew neither consistency nor law and was peopled by phantom as much as by real perils, they possessed a kind of unequalled insolence—"ready to fetch you a tooth-picker from the furthest inch of Asia; bring you the length of Prester John's foot; fetch you a hair off the Great Cham's beard; do you any embassy to the Pygmies".

Then followed the settlers, the Pilgrims, Captain John Smith, Lord Delaware, Roger Williams and William Penn. After a conquering struggle they halted for nearly two centuries on the Atlantic seaboard; they built Mount Vernon, that "Siste Viator" to the westward wanderers.

America was too wild and formless for the transplanted Europeans to accept nature. When the cultured Thoreau proclaimed the beauties of natural barbarism, when Whitman sang of the only true democracy, both were ignored, derided or condemned. The American people wanted shelter against nature. The American poets wrote

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- pretty sonnets by sheer reaction against the ugly formlessness of pioneer settlements. Whitman had first to find understanding among over-civilized Europeans. There had been, to be sure, an apparent opportunity for the creation of a pioneer democracy. In the dominant North, inequality of wealth had not broken down social friendliness. For the most part, the men of the time were close to the soil, slightly uncouth, their philosophy a mixture of mysticism and materialism, hugely generous and generously understanding. Had this mysticism been oriented toward the kind of theistic Pantheism that seemed native to the new Continent, had its devotees operated that synthesis between the somewhat orgiastic Paganism and the natural piety characteristic of our people in its American home, the American people might have striven consciously toward the establishment of a spiritual social democracy, wherein the natural inequality of human beings for all practical and intellectual purposes would have been humanized by a
- lyric feeling for the profound equality of human souls. Unfortunately, Paganism and piety were kept rigidly apart, and religious aspiration was

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directed exclusively toward the worship of the Jewish tribal god and the sternly judicial Pauline Christus.

5

Small wonder that the individual drops which rose, moved forward and fell again on such a wave were unirked by lack of permanence. My father and mother did not themselves emigrate, they urbanized, and thereby helped to create the American city, the characteristic social form of the century. But behind them were generations of emigrants.

Sometime in the eighteenth century my mother's people moved to western New York State. Fifty years later it was time to move on again.

Grandfather Abram and his wife came into Illinois in the early forties, looked at the dreary village near old Fort Dearborn, and deciding that nothing much would ever come of it, went south from the sand dunes in search of good black dirt. The lands they settled are still as fertile, I am told, as when my pious ancestor began building shelter for men's bodies on week days and verbal shelter for their souls (if only they would repent) on

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- Sundays. He brought to his task zeal and a pair of hands that could bend a good-sized nail ; acquired, during an unusually long life, a remarkable familiarity with the text of the Bible ; and died, the oldest inhabitant, as rich as when he came.

Central Illinois was far enough for Grandfather, but his wife's brother, Jake, after an interesting time passed in digging gold and playing poker in the Black Hills, was buried in Fargo.

The next generation completed the work. When I am "at home" on Christmas day, I eat oranges and walnuts grown on my uncle's California ranch, within sound of the Pacific surf.

Father's people gave up before they crossed the continent, but while they were at it, they pioneered with a will. Arriving with Lord Delaware, they later, according to most sacred family tradition, owned the land where the University of Virginia now stands. Then crossing the Alleghenies, they founded and gave their name to a village in southern Ohio.

- Great-great-aunt Esther, a vivid if somewhat legendary person, moved farther west, missing no proper and traditional experience of an Ameri-

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can pioneer. She ran away from home to marry the husband of her choice at fourteen ; later, her judgment having proved faulty, repeatedly shipped him over the Ohio River to escape the sheriff and, while he was absent, supported her small children with the spoils of her rifle ; eventually buried the rogue, and, undaunted, espoused successively and survived several other men.

Great-grandfather is perhaps the most American of all. The death of his wife Hannah upset his none too even temper. Aged sixty-two he went hunting one day (it was late in the thirties) and failed to kill. Returning home in a rage, he allowed that when a man with an eye could not even sight a deer on his own birthday the country was getting too civilized—and disappeared into the West.

Some twenty years later, he reappeared. Gaunt, tall, with his notched rifle for baggage, he announced he had come back to “ clear the weeds off Hannah’s grave ”. All day he worked with the hoe, refusing to say more than that he had been “ out West fighting Indians ”. When his small grandson asked the meaning of the notches in his gun stock, he refused to say. That

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- night, for no apparent reason, he died. But the family knew why he had come back and worked so hard.

Not to have the frontier in one's blood makes emotional understanding of the United States impossible. On this account Americans divide into two groups, the older stocks and the newcomers. The latter are strong in the cities. They almost monopolize certain branches of our life, they dress, conduct themselves, talk and think like the descendants of old settlers—but they do not feel as they. That is why so much that is admirable in American arts and letters, the work of the later arrivals, does not touch the older stocks, why to the “sixth generation American” New York often seems as alien as Vienna or Amsterdam. The talents of the newcomers are often superior, but they have missed the frontier experience and the older inhabitants are impatient of them and their views and their insistent claims to represent America. Indeed, for a generation or two, the American people, having achieved

- material stability, wrestled with the un-American spirit of the later immigrants. But the struggle was not nearly so severe as many foreign observers

supposed. It is not over, but it has been won. It was decided that the older and not the newer spirit would be that of the country and shape its future.

6

None the less, the value of the later foreigners was inestimable. During all the formative years, the dim intellectual and cultural life of the United States would have ceased altogether had it not been for the stream of more gaily souled newcomers, who bought their way into the new society by contributing whatever seemed most desired ; at first, courage and strong arms, then technical knowledge, and last, the art and colour which we seemed incapable of producing for ourselves and had not yet learned to take from the Negroes.

But the late arrivals were almost all of humble origin. Proximity to them did not encourage Young America to self-examination and criticism. Twenty years ago nationalism was less vociferous than to-day, but just as deeply rooted. Our environment required us to think of the United States as something un-European and sublime and of Europeans as laggards who had failed to

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- develop the opportunities latent in the species. All Europeans.

The English were historically the closest to us, having “practically” discovered America. (As a boy I knew that Columbus was a Genoese who sailed for Spain, but never identified his name with that of “Sam” Colombo, the Dago who sold cabbages and “Brussels sproutsels” at the back door ; and only as a man I chanced on the Venetian home of John and Sebastian Cabot : I had thought them English.) It was natural and right that what one might call the pre-natal part of our historical ontogeny be laid in England. Most of us had a good deal of English blood in our veins ; except the immigrants, we all spoke English. It was proper that the English nation should, except when fighting against us, always have beaten the French, an effeminate people who attached absurd importance to art and manners and women. In Chicago we saw no Frenchmen.

- Not but what the English were effeminate as well. They gave their sons such affected names as Percival and Archibald. They had little sense of democracy and during the Civil War were

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said to have sympathized with the slave-owning South. They had stiff manners and spoke the language in a curious irrational way. On one occasion they had even managed, unfairly, of course, to be successful in war against us and had burned our national capitol ; later, they robbed us of British Columbia. But on the whole, from the days of John Paul Jones and Andrew Jackson we had always beaten them and always would.

The numerous Germans were looked upon with critical approval and considered stupid but honest. The Irish were Micks, but smart and good fighters. Jews were of two kinds : “ dirty ” and otherwise. Against the latter we had no feeling. The other foreigners were hardly to be considered at all.

We city-dwelling American children were in fact strangely incurious about the little Micks and Dagoes and Bohunks and “ Swedes ” (a word which included all Scandinavians and very blond Germans) who wandered in and out of our world. The population in our eyes was composed of Americans and foreigners who aspired to become Americans and whose children might possibly achieve the honour. For the present they were inferiors. I was willing to

help them outgrow their inferiority and in social intercourse often favoured them—to my mother's annoyance ; never, except when I intended offence, alluding to the unfortunate accident of their birth. These foreigners were scattered everywhere, but tended to collect into districts, through which, though cautioned by our parents, we liked to wander in the mixed expectancy and dread of a clash with their sons of about our age, who were "tough". That the sons felt us as strangers was proved by the fact that contact sometimes led to blows in which native America was not always victorious.

This was in daily life. In reading and studies it was different. Most of the books we preferred had been written by Englishmen. No denying that. Even better ones had been written by Frenchmen named Dumas and Hugo. While really good fairy tales were almost invariably found "translated from the original German". Geometry, a study which fascinated me, appeared to have been invented by a single Greek (the Greeks I knew were chiefly interested in fruit and ice cream). As for music, aside from a few patriotic hymns and "Negro melodies", nearly

all the tunes, when not the words, had been composed by foreigners.

It was a puzzle of which I was for a long time unaware. But I remember the day, when, possibly under the influence of Euclid, I stumbled on the following syllogism :

Since (1) education is a fine thing and (2) most of it has been produced by foreigners, then (3) these foreigners cannot be inferior to us who have no education of our own.

Which was plainly absurd. But my ensuing uncertainty about this matter was that of most of my countrymen.

7

For approximately fifty years after the gold rush to the Pacific Coast, or, roughly, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the United States were so absorbed by internal affairs that they had no time to muse, remember or anticipate. There was the constitutional crisis of the Civil War, the winning of the Far West, the broader process of wholesale industrialization and the allied task of building up that entirely unrivalled prosperity which is the aim and arbiter

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- of our lives. Of the success, let the statisticians tell. This was approximately the era of my parents, and, true to the instinct that has made us barometers of national development, they turned their attention to making a better living for themselves and preparing a less primitive environment for their children.

Those were the days of complete self-satisfaction, when the average American, secure in his country's isolation, knew little and cared less for the affairs of the world. So far as he was concerned, mankind had begun with the birth of George Washington, and might profitably fade away with the fading of the United States.

- But the average American reckoned without the prosperity he strove so pluckily to attain. First of all, because prosperity meant accumulated capital, which tended to flow into those parts, even barbarian foreign parts, where it found fullest retribution. Even before the Spanish-American War, our investments in Latin America were considerable. Even without the World
- War, the Americans were on the way to become a nation of foreign investors. And where our money goes, we follow.

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More important, prosperity created leisure, which, like a hollow tooth, must be filled or it aches. Leisure brought realization: we had conquered and occupied and industrialized the land between the two oceans—but we were not happy. We told ourselves we had nothing to wish for—and knew our words a lie.

Little by little it became perceptible that the centre of our so busy lives was an empty waste similar to that continental wilderness we had so buoyantly colonized. Of a real inner life, despite the often perfervid heat of our religious and sociological enthusiasm, we possessed only a copy, presented ready-made. Most of our philosophy, science, art, colour and sophisticated amusement came straight from Europe. Our own writers were either assimilative or unfruitful. Of the good ones, all but Whitman showed, in the nineteenth century, the sallow complexion of indigestion. The pioneer blizzards from Medicine Hat had withered the New England “Indian summer of the mind” and left nothing in its place. A few individualists had always hankered for something America did not offer. Many drooped in silence. The best, Henry James and

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Mark Twain, went abroad to die of severed roots, or remained to suffer and blaspheme. The mass were mightily American—and lonesome. Better a new continent to conquer than an empty mind to fill !

There was no denying the fact : for everyone except engineers and captains of industry and social reformers, life in these prosperous States was a bore.

An outworn religion administered by hard-headed ministers ready to pact with the rich, a number of plutocratic leaders interested in maintaining the masses just as they are, a self-assured, attractive yet intellectually timid people, easily cowed by eschatological threats and fear of appearing different from their fellows—these preclude any short cut to culture by borrowing from Europe or by honest native efforts. America had to follow the longer process and, within the frame of circumstances, become educated by slow degrees. The plutocrats were in possession of as much leisure as they desired to take. At first mere wealth satisfied them. The esteem and envy of their less successful fellows nourished their inner hunger. When the figure on the

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cheque stubs no longer brought a thrill, they started to refine their material surroundings. They began to build and furnish sumptuous houses under the direction of a class of "royal" architects, sculptors and painters, who were doing all they could to keep art expensive. They began to employ experts to bring together rare antiques and strange collections. They entered the market against European connoisseurs and sometimes brought home the prizes.

As the years went by, some of them even began to relish ideas. Many of the newer leaders had passed through one of those American universities in which a man of will is not altogether precluded from getting an education.

Across the ocean, back in the "old country", was a disintegrating but still delightful culture. Some American millionaires took to spending considerable time there. Many went in for the cheaper social and sporting honours. A few refused to waste any more time in the pursuit of either riches or self-advertisement. One could occasionally find them knocking about in odd corners of the world, reading good books, studying problems of world politics, philosophy, reli-

- gion. Their gratitude for a little disinterested companionship of an intellectual type was touching.

The mass of educated Americans resented the fuller European life. America would work out its own salvation, they said. Unconsciously they, too, had begun to feel the pull of the ebbing tide.

8

- It was, I believe, in the nineties that the first group of conscious American rebels against a standardized vacuum began to appear. In literature they made a fairly small figure ; in life they were larger. By the end of the next decade the movement was swelling, and had begun to be noticed by the community. As students in a dull mid-western university, savagely resisting local pressure for practical education and good citizenship (I remember electing a course in Russian as protest against the first, and another in Neo-Platonism to show my contempt of the
- latter) we embraced the cause of these American radicals. Mencken, the eternally juvenile, Robert Herrick and even Dreiser lacked the colour and

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yardage of banners, but such as they were we waved them. Against the heroes of a spiritless factual scholarship compounded of positivism and the "historical method", we discovered and publicly preferred Yeats, Aubrey Beardsley, Rimbaud, Nietzsche and Wedekind. I fail to see to-day any unifying principle in our choice ; but at least Celtic symbolism and German sensualism and American revolt offered an excuse for opposing the dull world into which the educational authorities stood ready to usher us.

The presence in the university of various evangelical auxiliaries to education ever ready to "interfere" and "influence", sent me to seek release in the Hebrew Bible and Brahminism. Self-satisfied sociology drove me to Max Stirner and the lectures of Emma Goldman. Not academic courses but an interest in socialism awakened by reaction to the general pressure to get on and become rich, brought me to the economics of John Stuart Mill and Charles Gide, in an effort to weigh the "plus value" theory.

When the war finally came, it found America a field already tilled. It was during this period that America definitely became self-conscious.

It was not the prolonged struggle that exhausted Europe's spiritual vitality. That great river was already running thin. By the end of the century the European unity of style had split into virtual anarchy. *Fin-de-siècle* neurosis was everywhere. It was no mere coincidence that cubism and atonal music and psychoanalysis preceded the armed conflict. Whatever their intrinsic value, they represented in their own spheres the same forces that were so soon to emerge in the nightmare of 1914.

Therefore the decade 1910-1920 may some day receive historical consideration less for the catastrophe it contained than for the fact that approximately then the great heart which for centuries had nourished the five continents suddenly ceased to suffice for home consumption. Europe no longer possessed the nerve force for new spiritual creation.

Suddenly, during the war, the great umbilical artery connecting us to Europe ran dry. And

like a newborn baby, we gasped and discovered ' we had a hitherto hardly noticed driving centre of our own. In trade and industry, in finance, finally even in the realm of intellect, we were forced back on our own resources. The result astonished the world—and us as part of it. When, during the long deadlock of warring peoples, Europe's mind went blank and failed to produce a peace formula, the United States supplied the ideal force that really brought the conflict to an end, the since derided democratic slogan which really expressed something that flourishes in our country—and perhaps there alone.

Ours were the notions, though not the spirit, that shaped the war settlement: ours are the golden chains that have for the time being roped the centrifugally minded fragments of Europe together.

But besides the expansive pressure of our own abundance, and the call of the empty heart, there was another circumstance that prepared the way for our growing interest in Europe. The American Expedition was hardly fortuitous in its origin, since Europe had begun to show a spiritual deficit that worked like a vacuum. It was any-

• thing but fortuitous in its consequences. During the war, nearly three million young Americans had personal contact with a full-blown civilization. As individuals, most of the soldiers felt themselves alien. Puritanism and frontier provincialism prevented full understanding and approval, but they tasted a subtle drug ; looked in the window at a life that is not all work and sports and uplift ; heard melodies more exciting than the American C-major hymn to progress. When they returned home, something of it all remained.

And not all the soldiers returned. Over the globe, especially in Europe, there is a sprinkling of war veterans who, when discharged from the army, refused to go home. They are not merely city youths intoxicated with the free life of Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen. They come from Davenport and Oklahoma City and prefer an adult's world to a beautifully kept nursery.

In nearly every developed American who does not go in for drink or advertising or reform, there is some slight wish to create civilization—a more • complex aesthetic and intellectual life in vital forms America does not as yet provide It is a desire for leisure bravely filled, for internal as well

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as external adventure, for what can only be called culture.

II

Hence the new American attitude to Europe and the increasing number of visitors. I do not refer to those who come seeking a field of operations for their own activities, those financial and mechanical and commercial schemes in which Americans are proving so efficient. They are comparatively few. It is not only fashionable curiosity or a desire to see the places they have read about that draws the others—not even, generally speaking, a desire to study new art movements or innovations in traffic control. Contemporary Europe has little to teach and, except fine personalities inaccessible to the casual tourist, little to offer. What draws the American is the thing fossilized in Mount Vernon, something whose last bloom can still be seen in Sussex and Touraine—a civilized and organic society. He is the pioneer runaway returning to his own youth, to his aged and genteel parents. He finds them quaint; they seem less vital than contemporary Americans. But their refined old

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•features, with the hint of subtle joys and understandings he renounced for more vivid experiences, stir him more than he will admit. He smiles at their old-fashioned ways, he wonders at their conservatism ; eagerly he exhibits the fruits of his wanderings and offers assistance from his well-filled pockets. Half he envies them the settled and refined old homestead they have begun a little to neglect. But as for living with them—— Two generations always find it hard to live together, and between the new country and the old lie, not generations, but centuries of absence. The American must go back to the country he has made, a little more conscious of its shortcomings and of the fact that individual prosperity does not necessarily make for civilized living. He may even, if he be unusually impressionable, wonder wistfully whether true civilization can ever bloom in a homeless land. . . .

Meanwhile the tide runs eastward across the Atlantic and the prodigal returns, not to repent but to dream and demonstrate and sell. Europe is becoming Americanized.

Systole, diastole.

II

THE ESSENCE OF AMERICANISM

I

THE handiworks of nature reveal so much individuality that a variation from continent to continent, even in such partly self-determining creatures as human beings, ought to be expected. Yet, given the slowness of nature's methods, it is remarkable that we Americans, a people European in origin and of mixed stock, have in so short a time acquired something which differentiates us sharply from each and all the peoples of the Mother Continent. The "typically American" is almost as distinguishable anywhere as the "typically African". A European landing in the United States realizes at once that he is outside his family circle. An American returning after years of absence is equally aware of the change.

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•It is not essentially a matter of different externals or even physique. The fact is that there is something in the national personality which differentiates us from the rest of the world.

We feel this something, this Americanism—our army in France suffered acutely from spiritual maladjustment—and are glad of it, proud of it. Europeans are equally conscious of it, equally self-satisfied, and on the basis of it maintain a somewhat patronizing air which not even their post-war dependence upon us has obliterated.

2

Yet Americanism is like *being* or *free will* or *motion*. So long as we avoid definition we know all that is necessary about it. When we start to be precise we are no longer very sure. As an abstract something, a quintessence of analysis and experience, it annoys our American minds by escaping mathematical calculation or reduction to a quantitative standard. At most we can only describe our view of it; negatively by affirming what it is not, or positively by aggregation of admitted features. While throughout the world Americanism is to-day a common expression

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standing for anything from gum chewing to Behaviourism, any attempt to fix its meaning fundamentally or exhaustively usually ends in a serious and thoroughly unscientific controversy.

Even at home we are hazy about what we mean. The Americanism of the Legion and the Ku Klux is only distantly related to that of the Rotary Clubs and Kiwanis. There is a chasm between the serene appreciation of present America by Santayana and Waldo Frank's lyric dream of a true civilization, though to me both are admirable.

If we go abroad the disagreement is worse. Even so jovial a soul as Gilbert K. Chesterton finds Americanism an appalling danger to contemporary Europe. An acute German, Theodor Lüddecke, sees similar peril in the "rhythm of American economic life". And most extreme is W. T. Colyer, an English communist, who defines Americanism as a "world menace" and decrees to the Americans who are fighting it the same universal admiration by enlightened men that he bestows on the pioneer revolutionaries of Russia under tsardom. On the other side, a gifted young French writer, Jean Georges Auriol, believes "American brutality" to be the much

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'needed antidote for Europe's "excessively cerebral sensibility", meaning, doubtless, Europe's intellectual aloofness from fundamentals.

It is a little confusing. How can we know ourselves when some find the essence of our civilization to be supercapitalism ; some, absolute industrialism ; others collectivism crushing to personality ; and still others, "Anglo-Saxon individualism" ? To us, generally, Americanism is identified with political freedom : to Central and South America, as well as to our own Negroes, we spell arrogance and oppression.

Now of course Americanism must in some sense signify everything particular that we are or think or do. But this is not enough. Intelligibility requires some identity of concept and vocabulary between speaker and listener.

3

Our national personality is growing and hardening. There is an American view of life, an American type of conduct, an American dress and carriage, American manners, American business methods, American social customs and beliefs, American architecture. American money,

prestige, travellers, films and printed books and periodicals are taking American life everywhere, with obvious results. Go where you will, you find increasing signs of American influence. But it is far from easy to state just what this influence consists in. What is it that has made us different from our own blood ancestors and cousins in Europe ; what distinguishes us from the Siberians, a people whose climate, type of life, available territory and opportunities are at least comparable to ours ? Is Americanism something new and original ? Professor Wilhelm Worringer, a brilliant historian, believes that the old Egyptians were, to all intents and purposes, the Americans of their day, an artificial people, without true inwardness or creative power, but great in material achievement and sense of expediency. Are the United States an inspiration or an episode ? Are we a beginning or an end of something ? Or is North America merely the appropriate setting for one more scene in the long human adventure that began with the first stir of life on this planet ?

Is Americanism a levelling down and a mediocracy or are our leaders, at least in finance and

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industry, as toweringly great as they themselves and the success magazines believe them to be?

Clearly, not all the elements huddled under the elastic term "Americanism" are of equal essence. Some are accidental or peripheral or derived, while others possess at least historical and spiritual primacy and seem more central to our national being. But no question of the value, importance, depth, extent and prospects of Americanism can rise until the more important of these elements be selected from the aggregate. Such a selection, being personal and without rigid scientific criterion, will be approved or rejected on much the same general grounds upon which men select their philosophy, namely, on its power of inner conviction, its applicability, its degree of harmony to the demands of the mind and the imagination. At the same time no one would take the trouble to make, still less to publish, such a selection without the conviction that it comes close to the "essential truth".

4

English Liberty is defined by its apologist, George Santayana, as "the slow co-operation of

free men ". It is our direct heritage from Great Britain, was brought by the first settlers and cannot be overestimated as a force in shaping our characters. It implies that, in last analysis, there are no conflicting interests within a single people so important that for any of them the existence of the whole should be jeopardized. Its importance in our national history is fundamental. Under English Liberty the American people, so originally heterogeneous, have only once pushed domestic dispute to its bitter bloody end. English Liberty is the foe of all fanaticism and of every absolute truth, the friend of compromise, political expediency and statesmanship. Therefore it resists social pressure from both sides and produces an atmosphere favourable to moderate individualism.

It has preserved our confidence in some personal freedom even under majority constraint. It has made us resolute opponents of any obligatory co-operation such as Marxism, has held off factional domination and formed us pliant to the social whole.

It has done more : it has greatly modified natural envy. Even Puritan fanatics were led

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to a view of life as a game played among friends according to certain rules. Thanks to this, we have conquered our continent and enriched ourselves beyond all previous example without much quarrelling. The American attitude toward the millionaire is not hostile or envious : it is rather that of the high-school athlete toward an Olympic champion—admiration of achievement in the field where all are striving. Our political life lacks (on the whole) the sharp hostilities and cruel partisanship of continental Europe precisely because of the ancient English belief that all social existence is at best a compromise.

But while in England special classes and traditions and privileges checked the full development of this social and ethical convention, in the United States frontier life made “ the slow co-operation of free men ” into a universal (and intangible) dogma, invaluable in the subjugation of the wilderness. Frontier life forced us to be companionable, by driving home the advantages of sticking together. It made us generous by instinctive self-interest. In such a milieu the English tendency toward free co-operation was turned into a hundred vital fields. In the words

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of Santayana, " Everywhere co-operation is taken for granted, as something no one would be short sighted enough to refuse. . . . It is of the essence of Americanism and is accepted as such by all the polyglot peoples that turn to the new world with the pathetic but manly purpose of beginning life on a new principle. . . . The instinct is to run and help."

Without English Liberty, developed and perfected, modern America could never have come to be.

5

Puritanism began in America as the grim forebodings of self-righteous and tyrannous kill-joys and ended by producing a nation of vociferous optimists. Starting as a terrifying doctrine of Grace whereby some were predestined to sing and some to simmer for all eternity, Puritanism in the United States went through a most curious process of transformation. In odd corners you can, thanks to a somewhat deliberate seclusion, still find it in its original strength, and in those districts there really remains something of the thin-lipped Stoicism of the founders.

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•But on the whole, despite generations of brimstone divines and loud-mouthed revivalists, the old Puritan spirit is failing. Its sexual scruples, its snarl at pleasure and its distrust of intellect have remained, in so far as they could take cover under new labels, such as social decency and good citizenship ; but as Puritan taboos they are dead, or nearly so.

Yet we are a religious people. Not all of the early doctrine was discarded. A severely religious soul under the doctrine of Grace might take comfort in the thought of its own damnation if only it could rise to the height of envisaging the personal catastrophe as a small but essential detail in a pageant planned from the beginning of time. As a people we have risen to this moral conquest.

Yet in Puritanism there was a second element which was fostered and developed from year to year and finally came to be the greatest creative force in the American mind—I mean the belief in the will.

• The primacy of the will over the intellect and emotions was implicit in nearly all early Protestantism. Luther, Calvin, Cromwell, were

leaders of immense and concentrated will power, conscious that however inevitable Divine selection in heaven, on earth belief in (one's own) righteousness and destiny could generate all but irresistible strength. Throughout nearly all Protestant teaching the proclaimed necessity of the submissive or converted will actually resulted in a concentrated sense of purpose. The real religion of the immense majority of modern Americans derives directly from the early Puritan preoccupation with "right willing".

Obvious is the genealogy of modern transcendentalism, the yea-saying and autosuggestion and success cults of Trine and Mulford and Mary Baker Eddy. The modern American believes in the power of the will, if properly directed, to overcome all obstacles. Therefore success is always possible for those who make the requisite effort. And so strong is the belief in properly applied will power that advocates of the more traditional cults, the Puritan sects and Catholicism *à l'américaine*, have had to accept the prevailing dogma concerning the intimate identity of merit and riches and the automatic relationship of reward to effort, even where it goes directly

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- against the established intellectual tenets of their faith.

Since the will is everything, acceptance and education and reform are the vital practices. The will is master of the intellect. Therefore no reform is too far fetched, no ideal unattainable, no missionary undertaking without prospect of success. Our fervour is unlimited because we think as we believe and do not believe as we think. Never has been such a passionate pack of believers. No civilization has produced more different schools for training the will and influencing the belief, from the commercial sharpers who promise high incomes, to William James, who justified the habit of believing what is pleasant and practical. The myriad ethereal or materialistic cults and philosophies all preaching the possibility and virtue of success spring directly from Puritanism's emphasis on the voluntary faculties.

This doctrine, in a society credulous of science, has engendered the general notion concerning the almost divine powers of education and the belief culminating in Behaviourism, that the individual, being born "neutral protoplasm", can

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be deliberately shaped to any form or abilities we like if only the education be correct. Which is optimism in its ultimate form.

Even our common sense rationalism is anti-intellectual. For it conceives human souls and processes on the pattern of the machine—itsself a naked embodiment of purpose and will.

Born healthy, with the Puritan impulse to believe in the ultimate goodness of a cosmos that produces, even amid so much distress, sunsets and Packards and Panama canals, we needed only to recast passive and individualistic European religion in terms of universality (the crowd) to clear the way for unlimited good cheer. Since steady purpose can accomplish anything, one need only send the millions to proper schools and universities to turn out numberless Pasteurs and Miltons and Edisons. Only belief is hard and needs to be affirmed and reiterated and suggested endlessly. The rest will follow in due course. This is our conviction and it is an *apotheosis of will power*.

When later this tendency was found capable of being artificially stimulated for practical ends such as increasing output and forestalling social

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- rebellion, it became an obligatory national dogma and we a nation of boosters . . . “almost a theocracy of efficiency”, a French sociologist has called us.

6

Despite the criticism of cynics and social radicals the United States of America are a democracy. This means, first of all, that the majority can and sometimes do obtain their political will. But this state of things is much more literally realized in certain other countries without leading to the development of democracy like ours. Mere political democracy is not incompatible with fairly rigid classes, as in Great Britain. In France owing to a widely respected tradition of cultural achievement and to an unconquerable individualism, political democracy has allowed numerous “worlds” to continue to exist side by side within the same state.

Not so with the United States. With us the frontier erased the cultural traditions and melted the most varied social units into a common metal to be stamped by our exclusive social experience.

Frontier life made us a homogeneous society

(nobody had anything). On the prairie and in the mining camp, each man was "just as good" as the others, if only because the fundamental outlook, expectations and aims of all were the same. Factors of this nature are far more powerful than any formal organization of state or society. But the frontier period passed. To resist the subtle demoralizing tendencies of later social differentiation a firmer basis was at hand in the doctrines of John Locke and Sir William Blackstone, which had stimulated the Declaration of Independence and became faintly embodied even in the Federal Constitution. Out of Eighteenth Century philosophy and jurisprudence the American founders took over and emphatically expressed the doctrine of the Natural Equality of all men—a heresy many of the formulators could hardly have believed—with consequences to us that cannot be overestimated.

Obviously there are inherent differences between man and man which no cant about all being "born free and equal" can eliminate. But it is a fact that the United States produced a society which honestly seeks to eliminate them except in so far as they can all be inspired by

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similar wishes and beliefs and directed to the same ends. We do not demand that our social units be of precisely the same length and thickness, but most emphatically we require them to conform their position and aims to the pattern of the common magnetic field. Frontier experience shaped the pattern and established the habit of conformity. The field itself is shaped by certain values, presumably natural to everyone, and actually those of the vast majority of our citizens. In the United States these values are incorporated in the conceptions of *prosperity*, *service* and *opportunity*. Belief in common values and the participation of all in their pursuit and attainment, is democracy.

All that is compatible with them should and can be furthered; whatever endangers them must be frowned on and where possible eliminated. Heterodoxy is the chief enemy. Which explains social paradoxes that baffle foreigners. Economic inequality is compatible with our sort of democracy, since vast fortunes are the demonstration that our aims are possible. Personal liberty and social tolerance upset the pre-established harmony except in so far as limited differentiation

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be needed for constant rejuvenation. It is not entirely exact to talk of the "levelling down" process in the United States. Americans welcome leadership within the limits and fields set by the national consciousness. Where novelty can be shown to increase prosperity or *service* it is welcomed. What we oppose is not intelligent leaders but intellectual independence. Therefore our democracy is equally powerful in social and intellectual and emotional matters. Our life has, outside limited fields, been organized according to the tastes of the masses. In technical matters, such as business and sport and practical science, we permit the widest differentiation of quality and method. But in the choice of ideals themselves we hold that one man's opinion is as good as another's and consider that important religious and moral problems have already been settled by popular vote. This does not preclude change, but it retards it until it has become commonplace. For the aim of society is the "greatest happiness of the greatest number", who, according to Natural Equality, are competent to decide when and how they are happiest.

In a very real sense the American nation fulfils

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the communist wish for a one-class state. So long as we keep the gates of opportunity ajar we are all *bourgeois*, even the poorest. Outside the Negroes and the latest foreigners who have not yet adopted our view of life, American society, within the limits of natural snobbery, is classless. New-comers find immediate entrance into the community as soon as they learn to conform to majority standards and accept—or pretend to accept—our national values. To all who will not or who cannot conform, whether within or without, we are pitiless.

Prosperity, service and opportunity are no mean ideals. National Equality implies that if a thing is good, everybody ought to have it and that what is not ultimately accessible to the mass cannot be really valuable. Which has led to the most profound transformation of economic life known in history. *Prosperity*, as an ideal, distinguishes our economic structure from that of the industrialized states of Europe. They work for individual and national wealth: we demand that wealth be collective. We desire individually to become rich, but in a prosperous community, not in a castle overlooking a valley

of hovels. And we can achieve this because the standardization of personality has made external standardization natural and attractive and thereby prepared the way for the unlimited technical developments proper to the age. The several revolutionary inventions in transport and productive machinery have been more often of European origin but their complete application could find acceptance only in a country that welcomed every novelty harmonious with its collective ideal. Outside communist Russia, in the United States lives the only dense and progressive population that likes the idea of wearing the same clothes, living in similar houses and towns, riding in identical automobiles—and thereby permits all these things to be multiplied at ever more reasonable prices with less human labour.

Having so carefully circumscribed our goal, we can proceed toward it with ever greater efficiency.

Service, however, asks that the rewards of efficiency be adequately distributed and that no activity be allowed to prosper which does not benefit the community and help it in the way it

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wants to go. Prosperity is built on commerce ; selling shoes and advertising tooth paste are branches of commerce ; therefore selling shoes and advertising tooth paste are *service*—a conception that few but native Americans can understand.

Naturally, therefore, we fall easy prey to the priests of advertising. Where the acquiring of things is a religion, the offering of them is sacerdotal. There is a theology of advertising. There is a logic and a catechism. To saddle the public with useless articles, to create an unnatural demand for them, to scrap the still sound article and purchase the ever less durable novelty, to keep the styles moving—such are the aims pursued by advertisers with an almost missionary zeal. And to the exigencies of scientific advertising we subordinate entirely our fundamental aesthetic instinct and often our ethical instinct as well. But this spirit of service, which also dates from the frontier, makes us, despite the absence of workmen's insurance, pensions, etc., kinder to our poor and disabled than other countries. If you do not believe it, ask a person of cosmopolitan experience in which land he would prefer to be poor and friendless.

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On this account, too, our personally none too generous industrial and commercial leaders are furthering the scattering of corporate ownership throughout the country and increasing profit sharing and bonus schemes on such a scale that an ever greater proportion of American workers tend to feel themselves useful in, rather than used by, the economic process.

It is not better machinery alone that has made the average output of the American workman in most fields greater than that of his European brother. It is a different spirit based on the belief that greater production means a higher return, that there is a place in the national fabric for everyone and that those who combine brains and courage with efficiency and orthodoxy can obtain unusual rewards. It is the belief in *opportunity*. This is a well grounded belief. Despite the immense complexity of our economic organization, the way to leadership can and usually is found by men of fairly humble origin. The statement that opportunity in America is diminishing cannot be substantiated from the facts. If anything, the opposite is true.

Prosperity, service and opportunity, the American

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trinity, make the American society the most homogeneous and solid in the world. And like that other trinity, they are but the several manifestations of a single ideal. Its name is Natural Equality.

7

“Americanism”, according to Theodor Lüddecke, is “the economic instinct raised in all departments of private and public life to its highest power.” This is not a bad definition. But it implies that we are more material and gain-seeking than other peoples. Neither of which is exact. The truth is that to the American people business and economic life are more thrilling than they are to Europeans. With us business is not primarily a means of making a living, not even an interesting occupation; it is our chosen field of high adventure. As middle class democrats walled in by majority rule, our only free field is the economic. We have frankly faced our appropriative instinct and allowed it full play, largely for the pleasure it affords us. Incidentally we have practically eliminated poverty; incidentally developed mighty industries. The

urge is the buccaneering tradition that has lasted since the days of Hawkins. We know Hawkins was a slave dealer ; so are not a few of the modern industrial captains whom we admire. But it is not as slave dealers, not even as millionaires, that we look upon them—it is as successful figures in the glorious adventure in which most of us, on different levels, are engaged. In our churches we are hypocrites or devotees of success, in our homes we are Babbitts, in our museums and libraries we are bored : in the office alone we are creative gods and free to stretch our imagination and efforts in any direction, limited only by very elastic laws and the rules of the game. Here in the field of business and economics we have established our finest achievements, careless whether in this one expression of our innermost selves we dwarf or stamp out other existences hopelessly uncongenial to our dreams.

At the same time, because we are a democracy, the economic buccaneering of the privileged and more capable few must blossom into general prosperity or it will not long be tolerated. And strange to say, in almost every case the effort to pass as a public benefactor constitutes the final

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ambition of the successful buccaneer and even adventure must somehow pay its way as *service*.

8

English Liberty, Right Will, Natural Equality are in my opinion the essentials of Americanism as it germinates in the United States. But thanks to them and a continent to play on, the spirit of Economic Adventure which animated the earliest explorers and colonists has remained undiminished—to such an extent that this spirit, though clearly of another order than the essential ideas, is responsible for much of what Europe takes for true Americanism.

Economic Adventure is the key to our so-called materialism. It is true that we seek money with steadfastness and passion as the reward of the game and that the only generally accepted standard of excellence we possess is property. Tell me what you have and I will tell you what you are. This love of things is the origin of the foreign belief that we love money. Most natural misconception. No people in the world holds mere wealth so lightly. What we like is the symbolism of money. Our pioneers naturally

longed for the comfort and luxury they so signally lacked. When they grew rich, they gratified the wishes of their early days. This is the origin of our soft material life. In the trenches in France none found primitive living quite so unbearable as the "grand-children of the pioneers". Even at our broadest, when we dream of helping mankind, we naturally think first, not of beauty or brains or religion, but of better material living. This we call increasing happiness.

Even our loose social order and our homelessness are derived. With our cities so standardized that to go from one to another is to suffer no change in focus, with the automobile at every door, it is natural for us to pick up and move. So long as we stay within the same spiritual territory we lose nothing, for all of value in our past is in us and goes with us.

Because of our optimism and our meagre past we look to the future. We look to science and are competent in research.

Of course our personal freedom, in the absolute sense, grows less from year to year. We never did much believe in it. Few of our ancestors really sought it and it is hard to harmonize with

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efficiency and perhaps impossible in a democracy. There is little place for it in an industrialized society that reckons values more readily on the cash register than in the depths of moral meditation or the ecstasy of aesthetic flutter.

Visibly our grasp on the older cultural values weakens from year to year. They do not fit our scheme of things. They demand a multi-coloured society of individuals which would destroy our social pattern. In denying them we are denying our religion and our hopes. Tolerance is not an American virtue and humility is becoming rarer.

What we do offer—in ever more limited amounts—is entrance into our society and a share of its benefits to all who see things as we do. The American scene undoubtedly comes nearer to the ideal of the average man and woman—gives greater scope to the average powers—than any more mature social *milieu* (whether the price we pay for this is not too high is another matter). But if our ideal is really the “greatest happiness of the greatest number”, it is difficult to see how we can do better than this. It is my conviction that the American life, with its numerical and

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quantitative and machine-made standards, its carelessness of the finer distinctions and ambitions of the spirit, its generous materialism, its firm belief in Natural Equality, adequately expresses humanity at the present moment. This life is the unconscious yet logical creation of a mediocracy, here, for the first time in a thousand years, dominant in a developed society.

This does not mean that America is, in everyday practice, governed in the interest of the majority, but that its ruling class is larger, more closely akin to and in harmony with the ideals of the masses than has ever before been the case.

The early pioneer had transformed the wilderness into a physically civilized and settled land. As they and their leaders were of the same mental type, with the same moral and intellectual limitations, there was absolutely nothing to prevent them from making the United States as they saw fit. The American mediocracy is hindered by no tradition, no loud-voiced and unsettling intellectuals, and no hampering material privations, from creating a society in its own image. The foreign proletarians find this delightful.

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At home they had, in imitation of their cultured leaders, developed a certain number of domestic arts, etc., admired by high-brows. In Italy peasants still read tales of knights and ladies—Orlando and the “Kings of France” and Genoveffa—which they learned to love when chivalry was supreme. But let the peasants lay hands on the *Saturday Evening Post*, and farewell to Genoveffa. In America the peasant reads of farmer boys who became Presidents, and votes for Coolidge; the pea-nut-merchant chuckles over shrewd and chivalrous merchant-paladins who black the eyes of effete artists and villainous foreigners, carry off the prizes of fortune and marry the prettiest girls.

With this attitude goes naturally a suspicion of all things European. In order to get on with us, the immigrant has only to get over every trace of his foreign ways and forget his mother tongue.

Cultured Europeans have still no adequate conception of the drawing power of Americanism. It constitutes the strongest apostolic force in the modern world and perhaps the only one that can successfully dispute the future with Russian

communism. Perhaps our greatest asset is our intense belief in our own ideals, in our essential rightness,—a belief we suffer no foreigners or domestic intellectuals to disturb. On this account our very imperialism has a quality of its own. If the various Central American peoples ran their country as we do ours, they would still be in full enjoyment of their political independence. It is not as victims or inferiors that we mistreat and despoil them ; it is as heretics whose misfortune it is to live in disturbing proximity to such an unrivalled society as ours—and seeing the light, to deny it.

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III

EUROPE BEFORE THE WAR

I

EUROPE has so long been supreme in the world's affairs that it is hard for its inhabitants to realize that the time spirit has gone elsewhere. For about a thousand years the peoples east of Russia and the Balkans have developed an organic and personal civilization which, during its heyday, they imposed on a large part of the world. This latter achievement is unique in history and very naturally it created among its actors and their descendants a collective feeling of something like immortality.

Although the component European peoples were amazingly varied, without a common past, entering the civilization itself at different moments, they had the enormous advantage of a common church, the Roman Catholic, and a

common political allegiance, the Empire, that strange amalgam of myth, memory and reality. Therefore they grew easily into a unified whole. Almost from the start, the more gifted leaders seemed conscious of their European task. The Italians, superficially Germanized and with only too much history, seemed hardly of the same nature as the barely Romanized Teutons or the Moor-ridden Spaniards, who had next to none. But their soldiers mixed in the same Crusades, whose motives were incomprehensible and ridiculous to half outsiders like the Venetians, astride of two cultures. Together the European peoples transformed early Western Catholicism into shapes more harmonious with their own nature, and cut it loose from the formalized Eastern Church. And though formal religious unity was lost with the Reformation, there remained a common manner of belief, a common way of looking at basic things.

Each component folk had, to be sure, an individuality of its own, and each in turn took up the common work most enthusiastically at the period best suited to its own accomplishments. But influences foreign to the group—traces of

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Byzantine architecture or religious Arianism, for instance—were soon eliminated. And later defence, against the Moors and Mongols and Turks, was comparatively easy for geographical reasons. When finally, the classical heritage of the Mediterranean sifted in through Arabs and Greeks, it met characters so firmly formed that the classical knowledge rather than the recipients underwent transformation. Assimilation was painless.

Early European wars, being mostly personal, left internal things unchanged. But even the intense, national wars of later periods proved incapable of destroying the European family.

Therefore one can hardly deny the existence of a united European civilization with an indwelling identity about which generalizing is legitimate. Since the ninth or tenth century, since Charlemagne, there has existed here something individual and historically organic. Religion, politics, art, commerce, science and engineering unfolded along one and the same line and were co-operatively strong. European theology and philosophy were thrashed out in the European councils. Not a country but contributed something. When in the explosion of the Renaissance

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the migratory urge appeared, it was all over Europe at once. Portugal, Spain, England, Holland, and France might conquer and colonize and dispute the booty ever so fiercely among themselves, the civilization that remained abroad was European. To the Arabs in Palestine all the Crusaders, whatever their nation, were "Franks". It is probable that until very recently intelligent Chinese found the various European peoples as much alike as the many peoples of China appear to Western eyes.

Of course there has been steady development. The political ideas of the Roman Curia at the Council of Trent were hardly those of the British Labour Party to-day. But despite continuous change, European society has developed organically from stage to stage, preserving an inner unity that, along the analogy of art, can best be described as a style.

This means that at a given moment the thought, religion, art, manners, dress, economic structure and social emphasis tend to proceed from a common centrifugal spirit, of which they are the vital manifestations.

Therefore style proceeded out of style, slowly

and apparently inevitably. Gothic superseded Romanesque and gave place to Renaissance and Baroque, each in its turn sweeping over nearly the entire territory under European sway, and treating preceding styles with an almost contemptuous brutality. Modern aesthetes shudder to discover how the inventors of "baroque horrors" remodelled earlier masterpieces, burying priceless *trecento* frescoes under plain white plaster. But precisely in their vandalism the seventeenth century artists demonstrated how vital they were. So long as it is organically creative, a society never doubts its own taste. Individual artists consider themselves original when they are really creating the common appropriate style. Victorianism, which is an English name for something that existed all over Europe, is not highly considered to-day, but the Victorians, with few exceptions, were as much convinced of the rightness of their productions as were the creators of Gothic cathedrals. For Victorianism was still a centrifugal style of life.

2

The essence of civilization is mysterious. Obviously it is not entirely a matter of factors like

blood, bodily conformation, climate and ground topography. Nor are common history and language entirely decisive. Rather a civilization seems the embodiment of certain formative ideas, of a certain view of life, a mental being, with the progressive development of which it comes into being, blooms, fades, is destroyed or stagnates.

No matter how productive its past or physically virile its population, the society at one moment becomes sterile. Real style ceases to exist and its place is taken by utilitarian opportunism. The centrifugal energy is directed by its own momentum into increasingly external channels. Inwardly, there is doubt, hesitancy, the feeling about for foreign stimulant. Inner vacuity soon begins to be filled with miscellaneous borrowings from abroad. Productive activity shrinks to ever fewer fields, in each of which it endeavours, for a while, to make up for lack of real soul by skill and size and extension.

Art, being supersensitive, first shows the decline. No art in full bloom is tolerant, for tolerance leads to eclecticism. At the same time, with the decline of organic belief, growing rationalism asks of art the same justification that it demands

of everything else. So long as a society is creative no one affirms or denies the value of art. For art is both natural and ultimate, like religion. Where it comes to exist only under duress or neglect, where it persists as "pure form" or "absolute music" or dwindles to decoration and erudite tone combination, there is little to express left; where its impulses are driven into other fields, there is maladjustment and decline; where it ceases altogether the formative ideas are impotent and their function is performed by reason.

This means a decay of the social forms, but by no means of the civilization as such. Outwardly things may appear to be much as they were or even to be improving. Education increases and the energy previously concentrated around the internally productive centres may appear to be suddenly liberated for the great tasks of the outer world, construction, sanitation, hygiene, comfort and the extension of the general benefits to the masses. Convenience, business, engineering, mass amusements, become all important matters and are provided for with a lavishness of effort and skill far beyond the powers or desires of earlier generations.

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Engineering and medicine supplant state-craft and philosophy. It is not the busy hands, but the spirit that falters and imitates itself.

State and administrative structure, organizing power, military science may greatly outrun preceding decades and centuries. It is the belief in the State that weakens. The body, carefully cultivated and enjoyed, receives more attention and is expected to yield far more satisfaction. But the chief interest of the crowd is not lavished on the physical culture of beauty but on the successful champion, the professional athlete.

Moreover, since the component nations of a civilization are rarely gifted in the same way or to the same degree, it is almost impossible for them to maintain under new conditions and new contests, the established rank of achievement.

Early in the nineteenth century, or perhaps about the time of the American and French Revolutions, European civilization, for the first time in a millennium, began to show signs of weariness. The older classes were decaying, the older standards falling into disrepute under the blows of reason. Bonaparte's cyclonic career hastened this process.

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About the same time there developed a vast interest in the past and horizons began to widen. Typical symptoms were historical research, archeology, museums. Within a few decades scholarship was rated above the creative mind and education over spiritual achievement. Culture ceased to grow and began to flatten. Religion was attacked by emancipated intellects, happy in their enfranchisement from "prejudice". Now all form is essentially prejudice, for it is exclusive. It precludes all plastic possibilities but the one it embodies. One may doubt if anything organic can exist without prejudice.

Sculpture having ceased to mean anything froze into ornament. Representative painting had ceased to be a social necessity and was drooping into decoration. Heroic literature was accounted rhetoric. Music, the slowest of the arts, was mustered up by Wagner to a last glorious debauch.

The forms which collectively make a style were badly cracked. Some time it may be possible to put a finger on a definite date and declare it to mark the end of the last European *Lebensstil*.

By the end of the century the situation was clear. It was not merely that in literature realists and

symbolists were calling names while prophets were shouting for the "new beauty of industrialism". The creative force was clearly failing, the spirit becoming wilted and corrupt. There were small signs of a new apocalypticism. With it went pose and pessimism, apparent enough in such important types as Oscar Wilde and August Strindberg. Half-breeds from the Balkan and near-Asiatic periphery swelled the capitals, and their slight exoticism was welcomed. Egyptian architecture and sculpture, Russian folk art, technical novelties from the United States, were beginning to inspire the century-old exponents of European culture. Finally there came an attempt to aestheticize the new industrial material, which artistically could only result in an interesting but culturally unimportant flourishing of craft. Artists became depressed and savage. To recapture the lost power they had recourse to the treasures of historical research. Artistic power is fundamental ; therefore—they argued—it could be recaptured by consciously recreating primitive states of mind as embodied in Negro rhythm and sculpture. The result was the vast movement, splendid and hopeless, known as

Expressionism—a heroic submission of the over-civilized European spirit to a kind of Steinach operation. Less stalwart artists, conscious of their futility, gave expression to their pain in the irony of Dadaism, and had a last laugh at their pitiless but puzzled public. After this nothing was left but sober, gallant acceptance of the new democratic utilitarian standards, or a logical renunciation of the arts. This had been the choice of the boy poet Arthur Rimbaud, who having written masterpieces, felt the futility of poetry before he was twenty and left off writing for an adventurous business career.

For with the control of society attained by the middle class in the nineteenth century, the real ruler was money. For the first time in many centuries business became an end in itself and the trader his own justification. The effect of this change, in all departments, was to hasten the natural process.

At the same time all through life there developed a heightened interest in the psychic zone, in the hope that it would somehow turn out to contain the source of the lost faith and creative power.

Still the social tradition was powerful and its momentum enormous. Only gradually Europe realized its plight.

Except for the prophetic few, life was sweet in Europe in the days before the war. The combination of the new technique and vastly wider knowledge, the promises and realizations of science, better living conditions, the increase in riches and population within the frame of a mature society that still seemed to preserve the older cultural values while firmly believing in the future, had a delicate charm one must have experienced to understand. Science, historical research, democratic control, abundant money, seemed so many instruments destined not to destroy but inestimably to enrich the old organic life.

One travelled as easily as and far more cheaply than to-day, but a trip was still something of an adventure. Horizons were theoretically wide and books of travel popular, but men were still anchored in the tradition of a single land and submissive to its standards. Cosmopolitanism

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was limited to international aristocrats, waiters, barbers and a very few business men and journalists.

Business had not yet thrown off its traditional humility or finance advanced its claim for decisive power. Outwardly the statesman did not admit his dependence on the oil magnate or place the state machinery, the army and the naval destroyers, so unashamedly at the latter's disposal.

Socialism was a dream of a happier humanity, not an organization of human white ants. The socialist leaders were exceptional men who in aiming at bread for everyone had not forgotten the need for roses.

Anarchy within so charming a frame had all the attraction of stage thunder.

Politics were less bitter in spite of the class struggle and the traditional rivalry between nations. Diplomacy under the new economic imperialism could not indeed and did not really seek to lay the spectre of war. But peace seemed so thorough and so established that none but statesmen, cynics and students of history could really believe that the old volcanic instincts were not finally extinct. Why should anyone fight

when all were so relatively prosperous? And when thoughts of war did arise they took the form of colonial struggles surprisingly tender to normal life, or even of romantic battle scenes like the canvases of Delacroix.

Religion was bitterly criticized and much discussed. Rationalism was gaining ground steadily. There was a church problem in nearly every state and a few fanatics uttered periodical jeremiads about the peril of religion or of irreligion (according to their point of view). But fundamental problems had not become a matter of indifference.

All the arts were assiduously cultivated and few persons suspected how little they had come to matter. Society, stratified though it was, paid homage to the author, and the sculptor received more consideration than the engineer. Familiarity with the contents of the libraries and the art museums was thought essential to genuine education. Life had its little amenities.

And its intensities of thought. There were still people ready to divorce over aesthetic theories or to die for personal liberty. Society, despite the ancient cruelties, was organic and not yet organized. Men were less on each other's nerves. Things

moved slowly and people had the illusion of a freedom and the dreams of an unlimited progress hard to imagine in Europe to-day.

Incomes were low but so were expenses. Everyone who willed had time to think. Business was slow to take advantage of opportunities to increase profits by changes disturbing to general comfort. Individualism was strong and personality respected. The spiritual values still received lip service even from the masses, and few dared to suggest that a king or priest or poet was a man like everybody else, whose exceptional immunity from common burdens must be justified in terms acceptable to the crowd, or eliminated. Few foresaw that democracy might turn out to be a kind of tyranny: even fewer that the masses were indeed in possession of the machinery but that an unseen hand had cut off nearly all conceivable sources of inner power.

The future was conceived as a fairer edition of an already well-read book.

Within the framework of state and class, European society was a bright fabric of little worlds, each a law unto itself. There were definite classes. The ancient nobility—dispossessed

in France but eminently distinguished and strong in the army ; democratic and self-indulgent in Italy ; sporting and awe-inspiring in Britain ; fossilized in Spain and still authoritative in Central and Eastern Europe—on the whole held aloof from all but exceptionally attractive women of the other classes. The rich middle classes with old established traditions and the new industrial leaders formed what was called the “ great *bourgeoisie* ”, who on one side somewhat timidly came into touch with the nobility and on the other, with the professional classes, who in turn looked down on merchants and traders. The business or shopkeeping *bourgeoisie*, together with the lesser employers, were themselves a class, somewhat contemptuous of the artisans, greatly contemptuous of the peasants—small farmers or tenants—who answered in kind. A few artisans remained aloof from the developing proletariat of shop and factory workers, and, mindful of their places in a God-ordained world, voted conservatively.

Brighter threads through the whole were the artists, intensely conscious of their high mission, equalled in pride by the nobility alone and reserv-

ing their supreme contempt for the money-grubbing middle classes. This was neither a pose nor a joke : the artists realized the superiority of achievement in a field where only natural vocation can guarantee success, and honestly scorned the possessors of mere money. Closely akin to them were the intellectuals—professional teachers, independent thinkers, a few physicians and lawyers and government employees, less proud than the artists, but consciously superior to the factory owners and theatre managers.

Women were the chief social amalgam. An artist might marry a peasant woman or an actress or the daughter of a rich industrialist or even a countess—and society accepted the choice. *Més-alliances* in all classes were comparatively common.

But although the artists presented an almost united front to the middle classes (from whom they mostly sprang), among themselves they were divided into smaller professional groups that were in turn split into numberless schools and cliques. The painters consorted with the sculptors, but neither group knew much about the writers, while the musical world formed a closed and very haughty unit into which it was difficult for out-

siders to penetrate, but which through the singers came in touch with the theatre and through the orchestra conductors with God. The moving picture actor was practically unknown, and the broadcasting singer or violinist entirely unknown.

On the whole it was an age of higher intellectual, artistic and social standards than to-day. The lawyer might frequent the "world" or the "half world" according to his temperament, but neither had become the haunt of climbers and money makers, who reserved their talents for more limited spheres.

It was a society with more modest worldly ambitions, but far greater claims to integrity and inner power. How could its members realize that across the sea lay a newer, fresher country that, offshoot of Europe though it was, had already outstripped the parent trunk in its easy acceptance and fulfilment of the coming way of life?

4

And then the war came. For four and a half years the life of normally sensitive human beings was made up of horror, pain, sorrow, tedium and

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weariness. The genius of material progress showed itself as compounded of forces as readily utilizable for inhuman as for creative purposes. Such a war could have been conceived and executed only by an emancipated reason that trod upon the social taboos, without which, in some form, no civilization is ultimately conceivable. When after the war men searched for what was left, the old forms were in ruins and the old sanctities had gone.

Externally society seemed much what it had been before, despite political revolutions. Practically, something precious to the European mind had been shattered. Gigantic new forces hovered over the débris. Impressive by bulk and power as they were, to the European mind they seemed, and not without reason, soulless, mechanical, drab, undistinguished. So while the European masses, so far as war-poverty would allow, accepted readily whatever satisfaction was offered without asking whence it came, the better spirits, especially if they had long held high the banner of the spirit, cursed the strange new genius which they failed to realize as the same that had for a long time been growing up within their

own no longer handsome mansions. Thanks to a historical accident, this new genius became known as Americanism.

5

Much has been written of conflicts between historical opposites. But such conflicts hardly exist outside the contemplating human mind. Historically a period is always true to itself.

Had Europe been in its prime, we may affirm that neither majority rule nor the onslaught of profiteers nor any amount of technical development could have compelled it to undesired modes of life. But it must also be asked whether majority rule or technique could possibly have been developed other than as they were—by a society in which older, more aristocratic values were in slow decay.

Historically neither democracy nor technical science did violence to the spirit of the civilization. They were themselves the latest children of that spirit.

What Europe called Americanism was not really alien to Europe in any sense, save that of geography. This Americanism is largely

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the outcome of European self-deception. In new America mass rule and machine standards were furthered by the prevailing ideals and had reached high development because they met no traditions with which to contend. The United States were obviously majority-ridden, uncultured, industrialized, unaesthetic, utilitarian. Europe was travelling toward the same goal but more slowly and behind the mask. When the mask fell, the Europeans saw their latest selves : they preferred to think they were seeing the face of the United States.

IV

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I

To the idealist with a thirst for realization this is a brutally refractory world. For after thousands of years' instigation to peace and self-conquest, it is still impressed by nothing quite so much as by military triumph. It is not that the masses want war : few people ever want war. But military activity stirs such deep places in the human heart that the conquering soldier knows no rival in popular prestige, if only his success be dazzling enough. Brilliance is essential ; it was not homely republican Rome which dazzled the world—it was the visibly triumphant Empire of plundered province and plutocracy. Not the fear but the glamour of Islam's victorious scimitar converted men wholesale to Allah.

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Military triumph always carries its prestige over into other fields. In the period of their successes, Spanish pikemen and Colonial *conquistadores* spread Spanish culture and customs throughout Europe. A hundred years later it was the turn of France. For a whole century there was hardly a reigning princeling but sought to reflect some small radiance of the *Roi-Soleil*. When, after a series of smaller successes, Britain finally downed Napoleon, it acquired not only territory but French prestige as well. Its pre-eminence lasted until 1870, when Germany gave France a drubbing, and blossomed out as a pattern for the world.

What is plainer in American history than the cultural drawing power of military success? Time after time we have elevated generals to the presidency and have responded with scientific regularity to military history abroad. In the eighteenth century, many American colonists, indifferent to their language and prevailing English origin, gave their preference to French culture. Waterloo taught us to look to English models and there ensued the period of Emerson and Hawthorne. But soon after 1870 Germany be-

came our cynosure. German music (fortunately) and German literature (quite improperly) were extolled above all others. German historical method half eclipsed the common-sense English school of sociology (in many ways so naturally akin to our mental habits). German philosophy closed our eyes to speculative thought elsewhere. Our physicians discovered that Berlin was really a finer place for study than Vienna. German pedagogues were lured to professional perches in the United States, and proceeded to lecture us on our lack of *Geist*. And not alone the culture of Germany found unending and comprehensible admiration. Germany had whipped France: therefore her centralized system of municipal government with appointed *Oberbürgermeister* must be just what our cities needed; even the preposterous half-absolutism of the Kaiser found American disciples. No amount of Rhodes scholars or exchange professors from France could shake the belief of the American professors and a large share of the American people in German superiority—until the Great War. Then it was no time before they discovered a fact hitherto negligible: that German life and

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education were organized to the ideals of a social and political order almost completely hostile to our own—and honest German scientists and brilliant musicians were brutally hounded homeward or into poverty. But had Germany and her allies won the war within the first six months? . . .

First and foremost, it is as the military power that successfully raised millions of armed men from the ground at Myrmidon speed, brought them to Europe through infested seas and gave the *coup de grâce* to mighty Germany that America to-day impresses most of the world. Add to military prestige our visible triumphs in the scarcely less esteemed realms of machinery and organized economics—our mechanics and our money—and it is clear why the United States to-day are coming to impose their style of life on both Europe and Asia—and are loved and hated accordingly. “*Vincere*”, said Machiavelli in a phrase that is worth many books—“*vincere fu sempre mirabil’ cosa*”.

2

America's prestige rose at the very moment when Europe had become conscious of its depen-

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dence on the values America seemed more successfully to incorporate. In fact America perfected those later developments in finance, industry and technique worthy of imitation, during the early, or "neutral American" period of a war that was to weaken Europe's chief obstacle to Americanization.

Capitalism, technique and democracy were all imported into the United States from Europe. But their offspring, industrialism, whose essence, according to Bertrand Russell, "is the expenditure of much labour upon things which are not themselves consumable commodities, but merely means to the production of commodities which are consumable", can best flourish in a country classless enough to accept standardized products and lavish enough in consumption to keep the machines running full time. Where the producers' mentality is substantially one with the consumers', the industrial system can be developed almost without limit. The country that most lavishly provides the requisites for this system is the United States.

In Europe industrial development is still hobbled by feudal habits and national traditions that

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make for industrial stagnation. Technique has consistently been hampered by venerable aesthetic, moral, guild and labour tradition, and mass production has run contrary to the prevailing individualism and class division.

A large part of the European masses are still under the influence of their ancient habits and tastes. In many sections of this so checkered continent, old-time native costumes are still worn. In Albania and other portions of the Balkans, in Poland, the Wendish Spreewald near Berlin, Bavaria, small regions in the Black Forest, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Sicily, Spain, Brittany and doubtless many other parts, the traditional dress is still common. In Italy most furniture and a great deal of the pottery and the dishes are made by hand. The old arts and crafts are alive commercially and not merely, as in England, as the delight of aesthetes. This constitutes a diminishing but very real obstacle to mass production. And there is the national obstacle as well. "For the old continent to adapt itself completely to the henceforth necessary conditions of large-scale industrial organization, it would have, not only to suppress its economic frontiers, which

only too often separate the raw stuffs from the factory and the latter from the consumers, but to get rid of the political frontiers that perpetuate distinct levels and civilizations side by side." In Poland and parts of Germany peasants still respectfully kiss the hand of gentleman landowners. A great part of the otherwise progressive German industry seems feudally organized and managed.

Throughout Europe those who have money seek individual expression in their houses, furniture and motor cars, just as they hope for it in their children. In Germany and Italy the old guild tradition is still alive and does much to prevent the introduction of (often inferior but usually cheaper) mass-made articles.

Almost more powerful is the aesthetic and intellectual tradition. Whatever his political creed, almost every cultured European has his aristocratic tastes and standards that depend upon differentiation from the mob. Often he is something of a snob—he makes a definite if unconscious effort not to appear in any respect like those he regards as his inferiors. Naturally he opposes all levelling forces, and particularly those which

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couple standardized products with the unpleasant qualities of commercialism.

Western Europe is tired. "The life energy of European humanity seems no longer to be up to the crazy speed of the wheels and would like to regain control of the loosened demons of the machines. And indeed this mood is not confined to the working class alone. People long to be out of the fantastically keyed activity of the metropolises that threaten to destroy body and soul, and get back to a quieter procedure. They would prefer to renounce an industrial development stretching into the infinite in favour of a stationary situation."

And for all this the process called Americanization goes steadily forward.

3

What the European means by Americanization is simply the adoption of anything typically American.

When a Frenchman installs steam heat ; or an Italian drinks a cocktail instead of a vermouth ; or an Englishman says " I guess " ; or a Pole purchases a motor tractor ; or a Spaniard chews

gum (called *chicle*); or a German produces a motor car in series or hurries over his lunch—he is convinced he is being American.

And in this sense Europe is already pretty thoroughly Americanized.

4

Already the day of, let us say, a prosperous European business man is full of hardly realized contacts with the United States.

He begins the morning in an American-style bathroom and shaves with an American safety razor or a European copy of it. Over breakfast he reads a newspaper with information often supplied by American news agencies and whose composition is increasingly influenced by American models. In all probability it contains advertisements of American-made commodities. The motor car in which he goes to his office has a fair chance of having been made in the United States.

At the office, his adding and reckoning machines are usually American. If he works in a store the cash registers were probably made in Dayton, Ohio.

In many European cities working hours have

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been shortened, and he takes only a few minutes in the middle of the day to lunch *à l'américaine*. If very modern he may consume half a Florida-grown grape fruit. After lunch, over a Cuban cigar, his topic of conversation with his friends will possibly be the effect of further American loans on European economy.

If young and a bachelor, he goes at five to a dance palace and for an hour moves his legs in a manner native to Harlem, New York, to the sound of words written by American Jews on tunes native to American Negroes.

Before supper he takes one or more American cocktails. Dinner is still thoroughly European, therefore excellent. But the subsequent moving picture (American in invention) has a fifty per cent chance of being American turned: the regular play a fair chance, particularly in Great Britain.

Should he prefer a card party, the game selected can well be poker, a purely American production.

And as he passes through the city streets on his way homeward it is almost certain that from some roof or corner an electric sign will flash out an American greeting.

The American influence on European dress is not at first very obvious, but it is present in numerous small ways, particularly in men's clothing. American hats can be bought in any European capital, just as foreign productions are widely sold in the United States. I do not know whether it is thanks to the American influence that the Bowler hat, never a favourite with us, has so largely disappeared. A special American collar fabric, or its European imitation, is coming to be generally worn. The open or coat shirt came from the United States and can be had everywhere, though I am told that some conservative Europeans still prefer the ancient tubular variety that can only be entered through the bottom.

Under American influence there is a tendency in Europe to discard the waistcoat when the weather permits, but it is still weak. The European male likes to feel plenty of fabric around the middle of his body: perhaps it is for this reason that until recently he has worn his trousers close up to his arm-pits. To-day, under American influence, hip length trousers are avail-

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able, at least in large cities, and belts are commonly worn, even when their work is still done by the venerable braces. The European considers the belt as he does the League of Nations—aesthetically desirable but not entirely to be trusted.

The type of underwear originally known by three letters is also of American origin, I am told. Many well-to-do Europeans affect it. I know of nothing the United States has contributed to socks, but American shoes are much sold throughout the world.

To sum up, in men's dress, the prevailing European styles are English in origin, but modified in numerous small ways under American influence.

It is far more difficult to speak of women's attire, if only because styles change more rapidly and radically than with men. Paris fashion seems still in the ascendancy. I am told on good authority that the tastes of American women have not directly affected the creations of French dressmakers. American women buyers play, however, a selective rôle: those tentative French models tend to become styles that meet the approval of New York. *Vogue* in the American

edition influences well-dressed women throughout Europe. But even in women's clothes the influence of Great Britain is strong : sweater fabrics, short skirts and bobbed hair can probably be traced to English feminist pioneers.

The plucked eyebrow, a typically American contribution to female beauty, fortunately failed to make much headway in Europe.

6

American foodstuffs have hardly progressed on the European tables. Paris, London and Berlin have American restaurants and nearly everywhere one can, with a little effort, obtain American dishes. But the normal European does not eat them. Excepting the grape fruit I can think of no typically American viand Europe actually likes—unless it be a fashion of serving hot lobsters and shellfish. In this realm Europe seems really unteachable. The European cuisine at its best is superior to that of the United States, but certain American products, candies, ices, corn on the cob, ought to have found general hospitality abroad and have not done so.

Whether it is American travellers or world-

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wide temperance or sports or a faster mode of life that has brought water forward as a European beverage I do not know. Some years ago it was difficult to obtain permission to drink water in any European restaurant or hotel. Now, such idiosyncrasy is not only tolerated on the part of Americans but also finds numerous European disciples.

American bars and mixed drinks have conquered Europe completely. No English girl thinks she has had a real night out unless she begins it with a "Clover Club", a "Doctor" or a "Martini dry". No hotel is complete without an American bar. Even before prohibition came to the help of European sellers of alcohol, the "American taste" was carefully catered for by hotels and cafés and cultivated by European customers.

Non-alcoholic drinks have always existed in Europe but have never been consumed in anything like American quantities. It is notable that Europeans prefer their own ginger beer and *grenadine à l'eau* and *Himbeer Saft* and liquorice water to American offerings. The soda fountain has not become popular. But the balance is still

on our side, for although it is next to impossible to find *Himbeer Saft* in America, ice-cream soda (of a kind) can be obtained in European capitals.

7

Gum-chewing was introduced by the American army abroad and has made fair but variable progress. In England it is a social disgrace : in Berlin it was for a time a form of social distinction. Now gum is chewed by the " lower classes " in a few Dutch, Spanish, German and French towns and is unknown in the country. But the American manufacturer seems hopeful.

8

There is little or no American influence traceable in European household furniture. The average European is convinced that the United States is the home of every imaginable form of bad taste and would never dream of inquiring how Americans furnish their houses. But in the matter of household conveniences, originally introduced in the United States as a substitute for failing personal service, Europe is eagerly imitating us. Vacuum cleaners, electric ice boxes,

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washing machines and numerous other forms of domestic machinery tending to lighten the housework are gradually gaining a place, along with convenient sinks and pleasant bathrooms.

In the matter of architecture it is slightly different. The influence of American architects is felt in house-planning in the matter of more windows and better ventilation: this is really only one form of an admitted deference to American superiority in most matters relating to sanitation. I am told that the same superiority is admitted and to some extent copied in hospitals. But the skyscraper is a form of American architecture that really impresses Europe. In some countries, like France, skyscrapers are forbidden by law. In others such as Germany, one or two have been erected out of pure ambition in situations where there was no economic need for them. Europe has been rather slow to discard the old manner of building with brick and stone, but concrete and steel are coming into their own.

In architecture American influence is visible chiefly in purely utilitarian processes of engineering.

Europe has always been ready to adopt pleasant or useful articles, whatever the source, so long as they fitted its own scheme of living, and called for no real sacrifice. In this way it early acquired coffee, tea, and tobacco. There was no tradition of barbers strong enough to prevent the introduction of the safety razor ; no trade union of public scribes interested in boycotting typewriters, although almost up to to-day many public documents in France and Italy, to say nothing of more backward countries, were painfully and illegibly scribbled by hand. Sewing machines, cash registers, accounting machines, doubtless deprived many people of work, but they were so useful that they forced an entrance long before the war. Gramophones when cheap were irresistible, like radio : they appealed to the awakening mass needs. Barbed wire has become the rule and Pullman cars now run on several European lines.

Agricultural machinery met greater resistance because expensive and because it threatened to uproot the peasantry, in whose tradition and lack of education fearful governments saw a guarantee

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of their own permanence and a fertile bed for the necessary crops of soldiers. But the large land-owners saw the point: agricultural machinery was soon manufactured in Europe and is widely used, though in Spain, Italy and the Balkans, high tariffs allow the ox-plough to survive.

But these things make their own way and signify little. It is different in matters of dress where one fashion is really no better than another: different in the imitation of things like skyscrapers for which there is no real economic need: very different in the preference given to American moving pictures. For here we are dealing with complicated but determinant psychological states.

IO

The supreme popularity of the American moving pictures is a subject for wrath and resentment to any number of Europeans. The French, the Germans, the Russians, the Italians and the English are excited about it. For they very rightly see in American films not only a hindrance to the fortunes they might otherwise make from their own, but a powerful means of "national propaganda". The English are particularly per-

turbed because the Colonies tend already to gravitate more and more into the American orbit and familiarity with every phase of American life encourages the process. But if mass familiarity converts, it does not explain the popularity of these films : if the life shown were not naturally sympathetic to the masses, not only of the British colonies but of all Europe, familiarity would not arouse any particular enthusiasm.

It is not superior photography, as the specialists aver, that carries the American production into the remote backwash of the earth. Most people understand little about technical niceties and care rather less. Nor is general aesthetic quality decisive. Some German and Russian films are aesthetically as fine as the best America produces. But neither at home nor abroad do they have the whole-hearted success of the American productions. California atmospheres are no finer than those of Sorrento and though a pretty face arouses quicker admiration than a sunset, no nation has a monopoly of physical beauty. The truth is that the American pictures are made to the spirit and measure of the masses—that in the age of sport, machinery and mass rule, the United

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States embody the time spirit more exactly than any other country and therefore the masses in these other countries seek deliberately those (to them) ideal conditions, that "life according to the heart's desire", the American pictures so sweetly portray. To speak of the primitive quality of American films is ridiculous. The American masses are probably less primitive than those of Europe. They are merely freer to obtain the type of "art" they really like; the success of this "art" in Europe simply shows that it is the thing that everywhere appeals to the masses, so soon as they are released from the paralysing tradition of a culture that has outlived its virility. The American films fit the public taste everywhere because they are cut to the measure of the average human heart.

Much the same is true of the theatre, though here language difficulties present something of an obstacle. English critics complain that the London theatres are clogged with bad American plays. Doubtless they are right. But their real complaint ought to be with the London public that prefers these bad plays to the corresponding British output.

II

Cultured people throughout Europe are depressed by the fact that, in spite of increasing education, the general mental level has sunk. But here again they delude themselves. The general intellectual level is probably higher. Mental effort is merely directed into other more practical and less spiritually satisfying channels. Moreover, so long as the masses took none but supers' parts on the cultural stage, the performance was subtler and more finished. But as the change in mode of life brought ever larger participation in things that matter and industrialism demanded wholesale financing and results, it became impossible to maintain as actual or even important the fine things to which only a few people are ever capable of reaching. This is not the fault of the United States but of the historical development that produced applied science, popular education and standardization.

Inevitably European entertainments are becoming Americanized. For to the popular mind this change is attractive. The American newspapers are not only more sensational and colourful

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but on the whole they are better newspapers, giving a wider and fuller range of news as well as a whole bazaar of side shows. The American magazines that Europe has begun to copy are mediocre, but they are better than the equivalent European article when untouched by the American spirit. The rather phenomenal success of cheap quality American books can be traced to the liking for American life prevalent nearly everywhere, to a desire to learn about the new country that has so suddenly darkened the horizon, and to the fact that of their kind the said American books are more amusing than most of those written in Europe.

For the best in everything, democracy implies a levelling down. The treetops are ruthlessly polled or droop from lack of nourishment.

American influence means ever more and more fitting entertainment for the crowd. Amusement parks, movies, depressingly long theatrical runs of idiotic plays built about a money-mad chief actor, jazz bands, radio listeners, dance mania and sport take the place of the former popular entertainments—watching the rich promenade and perform in public life, stage melodramas, folk

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songs, band and orchestra concerts, military spectacles, drinking and brawling. There is much loss and considerable gain.

Europe follows the United States in motor and radio madness. But at a distance. Motor-cars are expensive and there are few amateur mechanics : life is still organized about definite family clumps planted in fixed spots. But the organization is loosening and the clumps are learning to pull up their roots and drift.

Radio fans are very numerous : they would be more so were most European governments not so fearsome and greedy and bureaucratic. Sending stations on the Continent are a close monopoly to be painfully watched lest they spread subversive propaganda ; a tax must be paid for listening apparatus and there are still all sorts of formalities to be complied with and blanks to be filled out.

12

Americanization means more business : mass production made economical by the rapid introduction of existing improvements ; quantitative standards with accurate and all embracing statistics enabling supply, demand, cost, price and

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profits to be calculated as nicely as possible ; reduction of types and standardization of product ; quick turnover and changing fashions ; and, most important of all, the furthering of consumption by all possible means.

The unusual wave of commercial prosperity in the United States which started during the American neutrality period and has been rising ever since, has not failed to attract the attention, admiration and envy of Europe. One by one, despite very high tariffs and serflike wages, the European markets have been invaded by American products. Such a menacing phenomenon demanded investigation by impoverished but none too humble Europeans. In the last few years innumerable investigations have been made. And so far with small results. For here Americanization runs counter to old and stubborn European traditions and habits of thought.

To begin with, mass production means a revolution in equipment. The rapid introduction of new machinery implies readiness to scrap the old—and Europe never scraps anything. In many cases it lacks the capital to install entirely new equipment. Almost always it seems to lack

the elasticity of mind. Where the owner is ready to "rationalize", the workers, many of whom might find themselves jobless in an over-populated jungle, are not. Unemployment in Europe is a tragedy, leading either to character wasting through doles or to hunger verging on starvation. The European masses are organized and in a way powerful. Reduction of hands, even temporary, meets their ferocious resistance.

The usurpation of qualitative by quantitative standards rings in Europe like blasphemy. For the best of European civilization has been built upon quality. Europe has always prided itself on fine work and individuality. Nowhere in the world have the crafts reached higher level, nowhere have artists dreamed more greatly and wrought more superbly. And art, almost always, is individual. The artist thinks of the single composition. Henry Ford looked at a Rembrandt. "What's the good of it? there ain't but one of it," he said. "Multiply it by a million and I'll help you circulate it." Europe wrought for the few: America is ridden by a passion for universality.

Before the War, Guglielmo Ferrero published

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a volume, *Between the Two Worlds*, in which he foresaw the antithesis between a quantitative and a qualitative civilization. This antithesis has become a battle and quality, though perhaps only for a time, has lost.

In the tradition of the guilds, industry was half an art, not a branch of arithmetic. Some European countries produce dependable statistics, but not even they can bring themselves to reduce the effort of business attainments to a few unromantic diagrams. Yet the American puts into his business life a romanticism the European still (and perhaps wisely) keeps for more intimate pleasures.

European individualism sullenly protests against the reduction in number of available types of merchandise required by cheaper standardized output. It not only limits producer and consumer in the exercise of their free fancy but damps the colour in an already somewhat monotonous world. Even in commercial England American attempts to introduce standardization have failed, with one or two exceptions, and thereby Britain's industrial outlook becomes no brighter. Yet standardization affects prices so

radically that it may win through in time. In regimented Germany there is a private committee associated with similar committees in other countries, which claims to have had success in reducing the samples in many lines of business.

The principle of the quick turnover, small profits but big sales, is most un-European. Except in Great Britain, Europe has hardly known a period of free competition and commercial liberalism. Competition has usually been national. The European merchant starts from the principle that he must live. If custom diminishes, he—raises the prices in order that the total profit remain the same! Price cartels and agreements help him to do this. The volume of business fails to swell as it should.

Changing fashions run counter to the somewhat avaricious mentality of the European buyer.

And finally, the favouring of consumption as the basis of production is still very foreign to European nature. In most countries the government—itsself delegated by wealth—aids a so-called “producers’ policy” that puts the accent upon the maker and not upon the consumer of goods. The results are: tariffs, export premiums, freight

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rate preference, lofty indifference towards the consumer (and in finance, toward the small capitalist and stockholder) and relative indolence.

Since the War Europe has echoed with injunctions to the workers to produce more: there have been but few attempts to enable them to consume more, and they with meagre success. In Germany, for instance, five-and-ten-cent stores report small results, because the merchant expects too high a profit on each article. Therefore the chief means to increased consumption have been overlooked or belittled.

Advertising is not an American invention, and I seem to remember a time before the War when the English advertised almost as extensively as the Americans. But that time is over. On the continent, the hypnotizing influence of advertising, the purpose of which is not so much to increase as to direct consumption, has been neglected by the very peoples who first developed and have since gone furthest in the study of mass psychology. Yet advertising is gradually coming into its own, and in many countries has been carried out in very ingenious ways.

On the contrary, nowhere in Europe has the

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attention been paid to salesmanship that it perhaps deserves. But this too will come.

In the matter of consumption financing or instalment purchase systems, only Great Britain has followed the United States on a large scale, and apparently with great success. Both the French and the Germans are very sceptical about the soundness of this system which is just being introduced into their countries ; learned experts write profusely to prove that it is economically unsound.¹

And finally comes the all important question of wages and prices. European wages are (1927) notably smaller than in America ; in Great Britain about half, in Germany about a third, in many countries even less. European prices, in gold currency countries, have a tendency to rise well above the comparative wage level, and often to equal those of the United States. Many explanations are given : higher cost of raw materials, smaller production, higher taxation,

¹ In defence of Europe it should be stated that Europeans deny the influence of the advertisement and the oily tongue upon their own " cultivated " public : such things can only work on primitive-minded Americans.

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poverty among consumers. But an important cause can be found in national psychology : the European producers do not consider it quite proper to reduce prices, and thereby to attract a wider circle of buyers. Abroad they cut prices with a will ; at home they lower them unwillingly, grinding their teeth and murmuring ruin.

For lower prices and higher wages would place the workers more nearly on the level of the employers, would increase their strength in economic struggle, and irresistibly tend to destroy the class system which, under all democratic sham and reality, is the abiding *desideratum* of the European rulers, both financial and political.

Still Americanism in all branches of business and industry is present and popular throughout Europe. Rotary clubs and other forms of commercial back-scratching are spreading with surprising rapidity. Department stores on the American model exist in most large cities. There is talk of manufacturing a motor car in series even in far away Barcelona. American business periodicals are being imitated. Henry Ford's autobiography was translated into all languages, and sold in Germany like a popular novel ;

many readers considered it the achievement of the century. Once American business methods seize on Europeans they seem to acquire a peculiar frenzy, and it is rare to find a European with a thorough business experience of the United States who does not look upon his own countrymen with a kind of indulgent superiority.

13

Few things in the world are more mysterious than wealth. Short of military prestige, nothing human has ever exerted a more binding fascination on the masses of mankind. There have been brief periods when wealth was decried or despised. They have not lasted long. Saint Francis might for a few short years convert thousands by the appeal of holy poverty; his successors built themselves monasteries worthy of so great an Order, and Lady Poverty pined by the wayside. On the covetousness of man, Karl Marx erected his one-sided but impressive philosophy. One cannot explain Greece on the basis of economics. But Rome can be explained on no other basis. Neither can capitalistic America. Nor communistic Russia. Marx erred in neglect-

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ing other not less fundamental factors in human life. A philosophy founded uniquely on covetousness goes as far astray as one that, like Freud's, bases nearly all our conduct on sex. But covetousness both of the flesh and the pocket, along with a few other instincts, have been the basis of human nature for as long as history records. To-day, as in ancient Rome, the old inhibitions have faded and the influence of wealth has as steadily waxed. The United States embody three forms of prestige—military strength, appealing to nearly every one, mechanical genius, satisfying to the enfranchised reason, and financial prestige, which means not only luxury but dominion. For wealth is stored power.

When a European economist states that the future of capitalism will be decided in the United States, he pays tribute to American wealth. For, on the one hand, only in America has capitalism had a (relatively) unhampered development ; while, on the other, the immediate future of capitalism would seem to depend upon its capacity to provide for all its members a satisfactory material condition.

On the financial side, the United States appeal

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to Europe in three forms : as a land where all may be prosperous and the cleverest achieve unlimited wealth ; as a symbol of a luxurious and materially expansive existence ; as the disperser of wealth and livelihood to other peoples in the form of investments and loans.

No European policy, not even England's, has ever been so exclusively economic as that of the United States. And therefore, in the age of economics, America gropes unwillingly but surely toward dominion. This is what Paul Valéry means when he writes, " Europe will be punished for its politics ; it will be deprived of its wines and its beer, and of other things as well."

Once the people of Europe migrated to the United States to be free ; latterly they went to become rich. Now the door is shut. Yet the description of America as a land of " unlimited (economic) opportunity " still carries faith in Europe, along with the annoying conviction that an American traveller is inevitably a millionaire.

To many Europeans American wealth means a physically refined and luxurious type of existence, cleaner, more comfortable and often more satisfying than the shabby artistic living of their own

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continent. Mechanics, wealth and easy transportation have already created an international type of human being—the person at home in any large hotel in the world—and this being is, according to Count Hermann Keyserling, “Anglo-Saxon”. As a matter of fact, he is more American than English. The women who read *Vogue* are, whether they know it or not, under the influence of American wealth, since none but an opulent and economic society could possibly have created publications intended for entertainment, in which the advertisements, both in interest and sumptuous presentation, outdo the reading matter. In all societies, with but insignificant rebellious intervals, common people have aped the rich. In the cosmopolitan era that has dawned, it is safe to say that the European masses, so far as they can, are constantly tempted to imitate the spend-thrift descendants of plain-living Americans.

The influence of the United States as financier is young in Europe, and none can say whether it is destined to last. The present period of American lending was determined by a specific and presumably none too frequent cause, namely the destruction of working capital in Europe during

the Great War. But whether or not these vast over-populated societies can, in an age of increasing mechanization and sharper competition, maintain or even regain their pre-war level is at least open to question. As the richest, most numerous, most economically developed, potentially most powerful nation the United States are already in a position to decide, if they choose, any number of European questions. It is possible that, having "reconstructed" Europe, our investing public will withdraw its money for investment elsewhere. But it is not likely. Already American capital is interested in a number of large European banking and business enterprises : in future such activity might seem destined to increase. With it will undoubtedly go an increase in the influence of American wealth on Europe, particularly in business organization, methods and mentality. In the *internationale* of finance the money-lender calls the tune.

A European in the United States is inevitably struck by the speed, the hurry and the restlessness of it all. He notes with annoyance and amuse-

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ment, that the average American takes vast joy in what he calls saving time without being able to say exactly for what it is being saved. Closer observation shows that the American actually does accomplish more in a given period than the European. The average labourer produces more in a day and reduction in working hours, save in those domains where American labour aristocrats have decided otherwise, does not usually mean lessened output.

Contrariwise, the American active in Europe is continually annoyed by the stubborn indifference of the inhabitants to speed. As a rule they cannot be hurried, and though their working hours are on the average longer than those in America, their results fail to justify such prolonged attention.

There can be little doubt but that the American speed is influenced by and is more harmonious with an age of high power machinery. But this American *tempo*, while it fascinates and frightens the European, used to his ease and his reverie, has not yet made itself very evident. For it grates on ancient habits and perhaps on a conscious scale of values.

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The same is true of our American rootlessness. Most Americans have no home ; that is, they are at home in any American city of the size to which they are accustomed. The pioneer tradition of wandering has been so encouraged by the motor car that we seem to be in the process of creating a new type of social life. For there can be no doubt that of all physical influences, that of the fixed abode, the physical and spiritual roots of successive generations fast in some one particular spot, is perhaps the most potent in determining the mental and even the physical human being. But how can topographical heredity, the home environment or even climate, influence men who are born on the plains, study in the mountains, settle in New England and winter in Florida or Southern California ? The domestic airplane, whose shadow is already upon us, will allow unlimited mobility. One can assume that men will be different.

But in Europe most of the people still grow up and die close to the place of their birth, imbibing a number of mystical influences from the fact that they are not merely themselves, but obviously and before all the world, belong to such

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a group and locality. And this feeling of being one with the past confers a sort of family *esprit de corps*, and while it retards their development, it reinforces their personality and character. In a rootless society a man can be but himself, at home everywhere or nowhere. Therefore, conservative Europe rebels at the increasing rootlessness. For were the old European society not already moribund, this one social trait, if acquired, would strike it to death.

Where local roots wither, the family and its traditional unity cannot long survive. In Europe the old patriarchal organization, the piling up of the generations within the same circle and often within the same walls, is still fairly common, even though in the last twenty years there have been signs of a loosening of the bonds. State, society, legislation, still assume the existence of the family, with its strong paternal authority and maternal prestige, as the chief social unit. Particularly in Latin countries, the family seems more of a reality than the individual, and sacrifice of the latter to the supposed family interest is taken for granted. The European family clearly no longer harmonizes with the external demand

of the times, but it will die hard. At this point whatever American influence has come in through the moving picture and literature can so far hardly be detected.

More effective are American ideas in education. Academic and professional and trade preparation Europe understands better than the United States ; but what one might call the pragmatic or practical tendency in American general education, and aboveall, the co-educational system, are influencing Europe and being somewhat hesitatingly imitated.

Sport and outdoor life are at least as much English as American. But recently the American way of looking at sport, the importance paid to it, the deadly seriousness, the striving for championships, regular training and the wide circle of initiated enthusiasts capable of discussing all phases with understanding, have been duplicated in nearly all European countries.

To-day a champion finds nearly the same worshipful crowd in Norway or Italy as in the United States, and the foremost athletes can at nearly any time crowd other items off the front pages of the newspapers.

With this athletic interest has come greater

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personal cleanliness, a renewed interest in other than the erotic and digestive functions of the body, saner clothing and in general a healthier tendency, both physically and morally. Thanks to sport and American moving pictures the European "war generation" now reaching maturity seems handsomer than its predecessors, despite its early privation and neglect.

Gradually, too, something of the American adventure spirit—self reliance, belief in one's capacities, willingness to take a chance, to venture rather than accept some shabby but safe berth—is becoming apparent. The War, the auto and airplane, American books and films have awakened a new interest in purely physical adventure which can be detected in nearly all European literature as well as in the steady demand for more American books and movies of the adventure type. An author like Jack London finds admirers and imitators all over Europe. Before the war a European with the slightest knowledge of American literature was a rarity, and in the schools Emerson and Longfellow were considered our supreme writers. Now Walt Whitman, Stephen Crane, Jack London, can be had in nearly any

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European language, and young authors are systematically read and translated as soon as they appear.

In Germany, Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis are considered among the greatest living novelists, with John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway among the more promising. Even in England good American books are properly rated. And for the first time in our history all Europe studies and defers to American thought.

15

The American contribution to world culture is small, as the authors of *Civilization in the United States* had no difficulty in proving. Compared with Europe we are still, in spiritual matters, a sterile country. Personally I know of no branch of thought in which we are supreme, unless it be in economics. No American thinkers can claim to the eminence of men like Freud and Einstein. And even where we are collectively imposing, as in science and invention, our originality can properly be questioned. For the most part, we have taken foreign-born ideas and discoveries and applied them with energy and talent.

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Which makes us practically efficient but does not prove creative gifts.

Yet as the cultural springs of Europe become less voluminous, our own small rills begin to tinge the common river with a shade that is truly ours. Quaint religious sects like New Thought and Christian Science acquire a certain European following. Even Mormonism still manages to inspire a few of Europe's superabundant women with religious enthusiasm. Europe is dry of religions while those we Americans produce as by-products in our search for the belief that shall be really ours, manage somehow to cross the Atlantic.

As pure philosophy Pragmatism finds respect and a few disciples abroad ; while the direct way of viewing life of which Pragmatism is the theoretical corollary is becoming more general, though whether as an imitative or a parallel phenomenon I am unable to say.

As theoretical sociologists the Europeans surpass us. Practically our applications of sociological principles, so successful when unvitiated by wrong psychological assumptions, interest but do not really move European thinkers, sceptical

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of optimism so ubiquitous and flamboyant as ours.

The same scepticism meets our political thought. A few of the new States have taken account of the Federal Constitution in the formation of their own systems, but despite James Bryce even democratic states in Europe have found our political theories too foreign for their use.

And this applies to our unwritten political ideas as well. Europe, except perhaps Great Britain, esteems the State more highly than we do, and does not like our democratic empiricism. Especially in Great Britain, the American preference for political to personal liberty and for social efficiency to both, meets both misunderstanding and aversion. America in European eyes suffers two sorts of tyranny—that of finance and that of an ignorant Main Street majority. Our readiness to sacrifice the concrete individual to the anonymous majority weal leaves Europeans cold and unbelieving. For Europe has always been and still is—even including Germany—a society of individuals.

All in all, despite numerous indices of con-

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tact, the influence of America upon Europe's inner life, habits of thought, deeper beliefs, fundamental aspirations and dreams, is small.

16

Russia is a problem in itself. Russia is not part of Europe in any but a geographical sense, and therefore its reaction to Americanism does not properly fall within this inquiry. But because Russia is America's rival for the soul of the European masses, something ought properly to be said.

American and Western Europe unite in considering Russia, regardless of its social organization, as a vast bed of barbarism strangely shot through with fibres of almost supercivilized refinement, with perhaps the only "underived" art in the present world. Outside art—literature, music, the drama, peasant craft—Russia is presumed to be a mixture, forbidding and fascinating, of disgusting brutality and almost sublime human love and self-abnegation. It is therefore not without interest to learn that the leading Russian communists look upon the United States as a formidable giant body with the soul of a cruel

child and the culture of the newspaper comic supplement.

In 1924 the producer Meyerhold staged in Moscow a satirical review called *Give us Europe*, directed against the United States. Americans were to be recognized in the somewhat cosmopolitan society represented, by the fact that they put their feet on the table, or sat in rocking-chairs ; they were accompanied in their entrance or exit by a kind of *Leitmotiv* played on what was then the only saxophone in Russia, which had been specially borrowed by the producer for the purpose.

Of what he calls American culture, of the real or supposed American spirit, the cultured Russian communist desires as little as possible. Yet these minds trained in Marxian determinism imagine it is possible to take over American industrial organization, technical devices, general hustle and eventually prosperity, without any taint of the cruel, greedy yet puerile capitalism that inspired them ! In Russia such revolutionary modern things as air lines and radio broadcasting (chiefly to the otherwise poorly served provincial newspapers) are almost more common than any-

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where else, yet accompany the wooden plough and a land-bound agrarian population of illiterates.

Prediction about results is more precarious in Russia than elsewhere. It is a fact though that sentimental American films are greatly appreciated in Soviet Russia and that the Russian common people, thanks in part to the Quaker Relief workers, are friendly toward Americans and hospitable to what they regard as Americanism.

17

At the present time, Americanism in a hundred forms is present and powerful in Europe. "Europe," says Paul Valéry with some irony, "aspires visibly to be governed by an American commission. . . . Being unable to get rid of our history, we (Europeans) shall be relieved of it by happy peoples who will impose their happiness upon us."

Many things tend that way. The old European culture is decrepit. Its vitality seems to be running away in a sort of diabetic self-destruction. It is giving place to something entirely new which Europe hardly seems to relish, and in which it is largely surpassed by the United States. But

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in the last few years many leading Europeans have become alarmed at the prospect of what they call Americanization, and are calling upon the Old Country to renew itself. Long before such a hope can be realized or disappointed it will have become clear that Americanization in Europe is no violation, but only a needed retouching of an ancient masterpiece.

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I

A ROCK of industrial capitalism, a dynamo of productive power, a siphon of liquid wealth, all in the possession of active, somewhat brutal adolescents desirous and capable of setting their seal upon the non-American world—so the United States appear to Europe and the far continents. In so far as the European individual cherishes capitalism or admires wealth and efficient energy he gives frank and often unstinted praise to American prowess in these fields. Architects, engineers, bankers, business men, doctors, newspaper men often sing the glories of “dollar land” in Europe, many of them in the face of current prejudice and legend. Professor M. J. Bonn, the Berlin economist, in two

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small but excellent volumes, *America and Money and Mind*, has dug deeply into the American psyche, usually rather impenetrable to Europe, and is generous in his evaluation of what he has found. But he does not suggest integral imitation by Europe.

It is a fact that of the cultured Europeans who have given serious consideration to Americanism, practically none approve it to the extent of wishing to further its growth in their countries. Generally speaking, the more Europe's cultural leaders witness the inroads of the American system into their world, the more pointed their hostility and sweeping their derogation become.

Europe's idealists find in America only a severer case of the general illness from which the entire globe, in their opinion, is suffering. Dr. Hans Zbinden, the philosopher of Zurich, after tracing the outstanding democratic figures of American history from Franklin through Jefferson to Walt Whitman and Lincoln, deplors all modern democracy with its grasping hand and levelling scythe, to him symbols of the tendencies that have robbed contemporary life of its soul.

Paul Valéry, the French Academician, allows

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his irony to illumine contemporary darkness by pronouncing American dominion a proper punishment for Europe, a continent favoured by Fate with men and means to maintain itself indefinitely, but too stupid to use them.

Count Hermann Keyserling, the sage of the Darmstadt School of Wisdom, grudgingly admits that it would be "no misfortune should sadly Balkanized Europe be saved from its own worst inclinations for a time by American superpower". But neither by temperament, birth nor property loss through the Russian revolution is Count Keyserling a partisan of contemporary currents.

To Oswald Spengler, one of the greatest thinkers of the modern world, Americanism is merely the last sad phase of the European culture cycle which, having run most of its course, at this point necessarily hardens into materialism, money rule, democracy and the empery of soulless reason. The only charm of Americanism for him is that it is inevitable.

These opinions, sombre though they be, are among the more favourable pictures of the United States as seen through European eyes. The majority of the critics see Americanism

through their glasses, darkly. The more their land seems to be offering dangerous hospitality to "Americans bringing gifts", the louder they shout that the American "wooden horse" ought to be about-faced and sent swimming back across the ocean. Germany, for instance, has never passed through the liberal period common to much of Western Europe, and is therefore considered particularly liable to a postponed American attack of it to-day. Sober Germans writing on economics suddenly burst the bonds of pedantic style to rise to lyric jeremiads against invading barbarism from the States. Typical alike for his general good sense and the depth of his aversion is Hermann Levy. In a little book called *National Economy and Character*, Levy notes with unimpeachable perspicacity how many objectionable American characteristics have crept into the Fatherland: the same advertising appealing to the same superficial instincts; public competitions and beauty prize contests; instead of good books, cheap magazines filled with ever shorter and more sensational stories and with superficial technical articles flattering to the ignorance of the masses; long runs of a single theatrical success instead of

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the sober cultural repertory ; the star system ; sensational newspapers with their racy appeal and cheap illustrations ; pictorial newspapers instead of description and solid thought. In short Germany is already pretty well soaked with Americanism. And despairingly the writer sounds his denunciation :

“ It is not necessary for the German or the English people to become Americanized. It is not necessary through deliberate propaganda to further in Western Europe the ‘ culture of uniformity ’, the schematism of the American way of life, the uniformity of its wants and the primitiveness of its cultural field of vision. It is not necessary—aye, it is very questionable whether such propaganda corresponds even to the economic interests of Europe.”

This last doubt is shared by the English liberal Ramsay Muir. After inspecting the United States and noting his rather favourable impressions in a book called *America the Golden*, he repudiates the idea that industrial standardization could be applied successfully to European conditions. In his opinion, moreover, a great part of American

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prosperity is due to the fact that "the nation as a whole regards wealth making as the highest form of human activity. . . . With our (English) traditions it is impossible that we should ever accept this view ; and if it were possible, most of us would be reluctant to accept it." Not less hostile and determined is André Siegfried, whose recent *America Comes of Age* is already considered a standard authority. While the United States lead the world in all industries requiring standardized co-operation, Europe can hold its own where the requirements are "conscientious attention, interest in fine workmanship, artistic initiative, the free outburst of personality". And Siegfried even offers a detailed classification of industrial products and finds consolation in the fact that he is able to reduce American superiority to a few rather broad types. Therefore he concludes that although the United States seem called upon to lead the Anglo-Saxon peoples, it will be long before they can lead the white race.

Not less concerned about the progress of standardization in Europe is the brilliant French novelist and political writer, Alfred Fabre-Luce.

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Basing his opinion of the United States on Siegfried's excellent work, Fabre-Luce declares that the very "quality" of European labour protects it against American business competition. Europe needs new markets, but ought not to acquire them by imitating the American system of mass production and high wages, "incompatible with our psychology and our denser population". How could advertising expect to standardize the consumption of a continent so variegated as Europe? How instal machinery ruthlessly without producing monstrous unemployment? Nor is it proved that the American system is better except for a continent with a relatively small population and great natural riches. Is this system not more dangerous in case of economic crisis? "Europe, a continent of less rich producers and less docile consumers, ought not to allow itself the luxury of taking such a risk." Alfred Fabre-Luce is a man of culture and tolerance, but his animosity against seeing France and Europe Americanized emerges in every sentence.

Where serious writers are so passionate, the shrieks of the newspapers can be imagined.

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Certain English periodicals regularly incite the Empire to act "while there is yet time" against the upstart pride of new rich America. German dailies publish long didactic articles wherein "America" is the symbol for all that is meretricious and foreign: one that I remember grew particularly hoarse in mouthing the evils of the American conception of industrial agriculture as against the "true continuance of the labours of our fathers", namely, the big Junker estate with the peasants bound to the owning family and subject to control from above. "The American manner of thinking steals the German peasants' soul."

2

There is something charmingly comic about the hysteria that often overtakes learned Europeans when they think to find, beneath the handwriting on the wall, the sinister letters, "U. S. A.". A writer in a German periodical, who apparently hails from some Scandinavian Athens, almost forgets his Nordic refinement while lamenting the "irresistible primitiveness" of 'American moving pictures:

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“Neither Germany with its feudal vestiges, its inhibiting problems and conscience, nor France with its aesthetic tradition, nor Italy with the cardboard Fascism of its Caesar films can in the long run seriously compete with the brutal primitiveness of America.”

If this be true, a less passionate writer might find ground for criticism rather in the brutality of the European public that prefers these films than in the commercial minds of the makers. Given a little more emotion, and climatic as well as social changes in the Old World will be laid at the door of the New.

Meanwhile, since by definition the United States possess no culture, American attempts to acquire it in the normal ways are both inevitable and ridiculous, like the caperings of Monsieur Jourdain in Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. When, for instance, a needy European desires to dispose of an *objet d'art*, he can combine educational philanthropy with profit by seeking an American customer. In any case the European has the part of dignity and the American is in the wrong. If the latter refuses to buy, he can be

charged with sharing his nation's crudity ; if he makes the purchase, spectacled art critics will attack him for " robbing impoverished Europe of its art treasures ".

It is much the same with education. Since Americans are restricted by European definition to unlearned farmers and Rotarians, serious students and cultured people spoil the picture and are pronounced un-American. When they visit Europe their sojourn is sure to be sweetened by the delighted squeals of native-born acquaintances over their " European ways ", and the intended compliment that they, or at least their parents, must have been born in Europe. For culture is a matter of slow development and inheritance. It cannot be suddenly produced in a land of Robots.

Europeans who like Americans apologize for us to their countrymen. With the kindest motives. Without a smile. Régis Michaud, in a book on the modern American novel, goes to some length to explain to his French readers that Babbitts are the natural production of a democracy of a hundred million souls that compels the individual to stifle his personality for the benefit of the

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mass. This is true enough, but it ought not to need excusing to a continent that is ceasing to surpass America in the height of its cultural production without bettering American achievements in other fields.

The European industrialist cannot but see that the spread of Americanism means the loss of his social and the diminution of his economic superiority over his workers, who will end by demanding an American standard of living. In the same way, to the former ruling class Americanism forebodes the hopelessness of an attempt to recover the lost political supremacy. To highly cultured people, believing in the supremacy of ideas, the profundity of past culture, the need for a spiritual direction within a civilization and the right of those who bear witness to these truths to lead the others, Americanism is more than a loss. It is a tragedy that only those who have felt the beauty of the Old European tradition can share. Salzburg, Lübeck, Chartres, Lincoln, Siena, lack the giant challenge of the New York skyline—but how much more human is their beauty? And how much more have they meant to the human spirit—so far?

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The European intellectuals do not believe that Columbia and Chicago Universities will ever take the place of Bologna and Oxford, the Sorbonne and Heidelberg, not because they distrust novelty, but because they cannot love a civilization based on material achievement, however proud. Therefore they scoff at American crudeness and turn the blunted sword of their failing influence against invading Americanism.

For the contemporary European evaluates his present in the rosy light of his long history ; the American's estimate of his country's actual standing includes a large item of faith in its future.

3

Were we less self-confident and less bent on proselytizing, Europe would be more tranquil. But already the old continent is squirming under our reforming zeal. There is something peculiarly exasperating in the attitude of our superiority in moral, social and sanitary matters adopted by our tourists. "Every American," says Siegfried, "whether he is called Wilson, Bryan or Rockefeller, is an evangelist who cannot let people alone and who feels the constant duty of preaching to them."

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Europe is sceptical of reform, along with progress and most of the other nineteenth century values. And Europe is specially undesirous of being reformed by Americans according to American standards. The Meyerhold satire, *Give Us Europe*, really voiced the opinion of the Old Country on the New. And a writer in a newspaper published (save the mark !) in Luxemburg, a country a large fraction of whose inhabitants has migrated to the United States, rises to the acme of French profanity in his appeal to America to leave Europe alone.

Judged by a hundred symptoms, Europe is jealous with the bitter jealousy of the Old Man of the Tribe towards a younger and already more vigorous son.

4

It can be hardly expected that Europeans, members of what is probably the most combative race that ever lived, will abdicate without a struggle. Even such a fatalist as Spengler considers that during the period still granted them by historical destiny, the Europeans can, if they will conform to the necessities of the hour, still play

the heroic rôle. In several pamphlets he has urged the German youth to accept the requirements of the age and sees Germany's proper path to conservation of power in the further development of the Prussian tradition, which he calls "socialism". His ideal would seem to be fairly well fulfilled by Fascist Italy—capitalism controlled and directed nationalistically by strong political leaders under the pretence of social solidarity.

Many other groups, seeking the "new leadership", look up to Fascism and openly advocate the dictatorship of the strong man. But on the whole these partisans of the new brutality are either dispossessed aristocrats itching for a restoration of power, or embittered middle class victims of European disorder, or capitalists with bundles of axes to grind, or adventurers fond of heads to break. There exist other people whose ambitions run higher than the Fascist big stick.

So far as I know, their clearest speaker is Count Hermann Keyserling. His message, pieced together from many volumes, runs approximately as follows :

No theoretical philosophy of history is needed

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to demonstrate that European culture is decaying. But this is not true of Europe only, but of all cultures on earth. In the technical age no pre-technical culture can last. Modern Europe demonstrates the fact that a generation of movie and radio enthusiasts, auto racers, flyers, and globe trotters cannot remain true to old ideas and social forms. Cultures decay when their indwelling "meaning" has reached its fullest expression—when they have nothing more to say. Therefore it must be taken that Old Europe has spoken its last word. Americanization of Europe is possible. . . .

This danger is extraordinarily great, for America's unprecedented power is itself enticing. American riches offer more solutions to problems than European poverty. "Liberal democracy in the Anglo-Saxon sense is doubtless more attractive than socialistic centralization." Thus the entire world, in so far as it adopted Western civilization, may become Americanized, just as, two thousand years ago, it took on the features of Rome. Yet Anglo-Saxon civilization, like Roman,¹ is essentially without indwelling spirit, and as to-day there exists no Greece—no country

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so obviously superior that it can civilize barbarians —there arises the danger that white humanity may be increasingly deprived of indwelling spirit. The only thing which can prevent Americanism from becoming universal is the presence of an effective European minority that amidst encroaching mental democracy refuses to be Americanized.

There is still hope for Europe. Americanism means machinery and the ruling type is the chauffeur, the mechanized savage. This type lacks, however, the necessary spirit to create the new culture. Therefore, if Europe can but bring forth a new type, combining the alert mind, boldness and easy technical mastery of machines possessed by the present generation of chauffeur rulers, with the spiritual intensity and aristocratic distinction of its former leaders, Europe can again lead the world. "Europe's task is once more to breed the new decisive culture type. . . . It can mean more in the future than it has ever meant."

5

More redoubtable if less philosophical opponents of Americanism are the adherents of international socialism. And by socialism I mean

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the doctrine that the State should in some manner guarantee economic equality, probably by assuming ownership of the means of production, on the ground that without economic equality, political equality is not merely useless but illusory. Most socialists are convinced that the creation of as complete equality as possible is the immediately necessary, as well as the highest, human aim.

Though the partisans of this doctrine are mostly to be found in Europe and their obvious opponents are the propertied interests in their own countries, a great many direct their sharpest enmity against the United States, now the chief protagonist of the money power they are fighting. Their criticism of the United States is of two kinds: dislike of what America is, and scorn of America's hypocrisy in pretending to be what it is not.

The United States, in their judgment, are, of all civilized lands, the most anti-socialistic. They are the home of the most aggressive and powerful financial interests on earth, and furthermore the most capable. They harbour the largest and probably the most predatory commercial combines and trusts,* and in their name oppose all international and socialistic tendencies of labour with

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ruthless opposition and acrimony. In short, they are the centre of world capitalism and must be socialized before any truly international socialism can prevail.

The Federal and most of the minor American governments, the army and navy, justice and press, are so many instruments of American capitalism. Labour, if self-conscious, has before the bar of American public opinion no chance of obtaining fair treatment. Industrial capitalism, concentrating money and power, is necessarily in the hands of a comparatively few persons, the possessing class, which, exactly as in Europe, but on a much larger and more barbarous scale, defends its holdings through conscious and methodical oppression of the non-propertied labouring class. America is therefore a class society.

What makes American society at the same time more despicable and more formidable than European society is its hypocritical claim to be something different. America prances and masquerades as the "land of the free", erects a French statue of Liberty in its chief harbour, and grants those who oppose its real tyranny no liberty at

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all. It deports or refuses entrance to radically minded foreigners, it passively sanctions the burning of black, and the mishandling of yellow people. It demands from its masses the sacrifice of all forms of personal freedom considered disadvantageous to the cause of the industrial Moloch the capitalists worship ; it ruthlessly violates its own statutes, its own conventions, its most sacred promises, whenever self-interest advises. Itself organized, capitalism, where it can, refuses labour the same right. Through court injunctions and police brutality and chicane it nullifies the laws it cannot immediately repeal or circumvent. Therefore, since the United States as the domain of a ruthless class posing in idealistic trappings have proved false to their ideals, the United States are the enemy of all humane people interested in realizing the great dream of freedom and equality for which the American forefathers claimed to have bled.

Moreover, the United States are nationalistic ; both because aggressive nationalism must be the outcome of their financial and industrial imperialism and because the population is largely uncultured, unfeeling and pugnacious, capable

of being roused to the wildest and most savage fanaticism when the ruling few find it convenient to loosen the press hounds and the jackals of the pulpit and the podium. A new war is the greatest misfortune that could overtake mankind, and this new war will be, must be, provoked by the American capitalists for the same reason that they plundered Mexico and Cuba and unleashed the marines against the helpless states of the Caribbean.

Admitted that Americanism is the most powerful economic tool ever created and the American conception of regenerating material conditions of life through general "engineering" is great. But before this tool and this conception can be taken over by a really civilized society, they must pass into the philanthropic hands of a labour—that is, of a truly democratic—government.

This government can to-day be found only in Russia. While on the external side—in all that the Germans call *Zivilization* in contradistinction to inner *Kultur*—America is incalculably more advanced, the Soviet government, despite its brutality and Oriental indifference to terrifying measures, honestly incorporates the

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will to realize a true industrial and agricultural democracy, to escape war for ever and bring about human brotherhood. The real classless state must be socialist. Not the United States but Russia will lead mankind out of the dungeons of prejudice and unlock the handcuffs of oppression.

So runs the socialist thesis. It is one-sided and highly coloured. The European Marxian's idea of the United States is in my opinion about as exact as Babbitt's notion of Soviet Russia. That international socialism is a practical ideal may well be doubted: who can assure us that a completely communistic State—should one ever exist—would be necessarily pacific or internationally minded? But that it is a great dream cannot be questioned.

6

Less openly but none the less deeply opposed to Americanism are the majority of European statesmen, particularly the new crop of dictators and regents who have besooted Southern and Eastern Europe with terrorism. In the insidious ways from over the water they see a menace to their own permanence, a danger to their power

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and a threat directed against the specific characteristics and institutions (Empire, Fascism, Monarchy) on which they have risked their private futures. Therefore as often as they extend the palm for American money, they shiver at the probability of an American financial and even political hegemony in the none too distant future, fatal to their own imperial or nationalistic or commercial ambitions.

Perhaps this state of things is most obvious in Italy. The present Italian rulers dislike all that America represents except abundant money. They know that the lira was saved by dollar loans and the Italian industries rescued from certain defeat at the hands of the German by Wall Street kindness. They understand the concrete necessity of keeping America's good will. The American money lords allowed Sacco and Vanzetti to be legally murdered, but they have the power and must be propitiated. Italy worries how best to propitiate the American *signori*. But it likes them no better than do the dictators of Hungary and Spain, French politicians and British conservatives. And the basis of this dislike is jealousy of the type described.

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Thanks to this widespread jealousy and dislike, all Europe vacillates between attempts at propitiating America and thoughts about a European customs union or even the formation of some larger political block of hitherto rival states. Since American extension and population give the United States an almost insuperable advantage in most forms of international competition, Europe ought to seek equal extension and numerical strength by uniting. A few pessimists even allege that Europe must unite or perish.

The results of such European combination could be so considerable that Ramsay Muir feels it necessary to sound a warning :

“ Already the European people are beginning to take alarm at the prospect of an economic domination by America and to organize to resist it. If it continues the result may be an economic war of continents ; economic ‘ continentalism ’ might be yet more disastrous than economic ‘ nationalism ’ .”

In opposing the United States, the European rulers would consider their action a laudable attempt to rescue delicate *Europa* from the designs of the American Cyclops.

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Should a united Europe wage war on the United States it might well win. There was a moment in antiquity when a union of Greek States, not to speak of victorious Macedon, could have wiped the Roman village from the seven hills and wasted the mountains of Latium. But the moment is probably past, even were the European statesmen to achieve the incredible and unite against North America. In European eyes aggression is far more likely to come from the other side. Americans are a believing lot : should their business interests come to need a subservient Europe for the continuance of “normal prosperity”, they might conceivably rouse the people’s fanaticism and reforming zeal to the point of an attempt to Americanize Europe by might. In which case, instead of succumbing piecemeal, Europe might unite as a continent to oppose the attacking continent.

This hypothesis is not too fantastic. Bertrand Russell believes that the American people are almost bound to attempt to dominate the world, and assumes that such an attempt may well take military shape. In the *Prospects of Industrial Civilization* he writes :

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“ In spite of an overwhelming influx of foreigners of all sorts . . . it has been found possible to produce a degree of national consciousness that enabled America to put forth a first-class effort in the war, and it is enabling her now to make a bid for world empire with more hope for success than attended the previous efforts of Spain or France or Germany.”

World empire ? It rings fearsome to most of us. Nothing is further from our intentions. But hear the English philosopher further :

“ America may not, as yet, consciously desire such a position, but no nation with sufficient resources can long resist the attempt. And the resources of America are more adequate than those of any previous aspirant to universal hegemony. First of all, America is self-supporting in all the necessities of peace and war ; both industry and agriculture could be preserved in almost complete efficiency without commerce with any other continent. Secondly, America has the largest white population of any state except Russia, and its population is superlatively skilled, energetic and physically courageous. Thirdly,

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Canada would have to side with America in any serious war, if only for reasons of self-preservation ; and Mexico would be unable to refuse access to its mineral resources. Therefore the whole of North America must be counted as belonging to the United States in considering the possibilities of a world war. Fourthly, America could, after the outbreak of the war, build a sufficiently powerful navy to defeat any possible hostile naval combination. Fifthly, all Europe is in America's debt and we in England are dependent upon America for our very existence, owing to our need of raw cotton and Canadian wheat. Lastly, the Americans surpass even the British in sagacity, apparent moderation and the skilful use of hypocrisy by which even themselves are deceived. Against such a combination of resources no existing state could hope to prove victorious."

Russell obviously leaves the possibility of a united Europe out of the picture. Certainly the odds are greatly against it. A vast European coalition could only be formed and galvanised under pressure of atrocious fear. Even then

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anything like intelligent diplomacy on the part of the Americans ought to be able to prepare the way for national triumph by buying out of the European block a major ally or two.

7

Such conjecture is more interesting than cogent. *Though the European leaders were able to overcome their mutual antipathies and, after over-running the United States, dictate terms to beaten Americans at Denver, Americanism of a kind would still conquer Europe.* Perhaps such a European victory would even foster it, for it seems a rule of life that victors and vanquished exchange certain characteristics. But that is not important. Europe will continue to develop what its leaders call Americanism simply because democratic masses, technique, materialistic ambitions, are essentially offsprings of the European mind. Americanism would sweep over Europe were the American continent annihilated, or even had there never been any America.

Yet because Europe is a mosaic of vastly different peoples at widely divergent points in their development, the amount and form of

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Americanism—that is, the degree of adaptability to the new demo-industrial conditions—will vary from country to country.

To a Frenchman or an Italian, even the shrewdest, the English and Scotch already seem half Americanized. Yet, Great Britain, in my opinion, will not be first or most completely transformed. The peoples who dominated the world's industrial and financial life in the nineteenth century feel most acutely the tribal jealousy towards upstart America, and while unwilling to abdicate, they cannot achieve the necessary humility to sacrifice their ancient pride and somewhat outworn knowledge. Sturdy British manufacturers generally still abhor mass production and will not scrap old machinery and methods. But they are shrewd, and once the great truth dawns that the Americans have really carried out a second industrial revolution as important as the first, the British will gradually fall into line, and perhaps in co-operation with the Americans, accept "manifest destiny". If they do so, they can prolong their period of empire by at least a century.

Of all the European nations, the Germans seem likely to go furthest along the American

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path. Culturally younger, fond of business, technically imaginative, intellectual, disciplined, with small material demands, they have already made the most serious study of American methods and the sincerest efforts to take over what they found good. Moreover, in contrast to the English, the German character is anything but stiff—the soul stuff is essentially amorphous and receptive, easily adaptable and malleable to leadership. Should the industrial plutocracy now dominant become convinced that Americanism is worth the sacrifice of their ancient feudal dignity and guild spirit, they could easily bring up their people in the way they desire. Large American investments in Germany would lighten the task.

The Dutch, despite their stiffness, have a nose for the main chance unequalled in the world. Located, geographically and mentally, between Britain and Germany, free from the waste of continental political rivalry, democratic, tenacious and intelligent, they seem admirably fitted to play a mediatory rôle between the continents. And though Scandinavia and Switzerland have already hardened into smug perfection, there seems little obstacle to the laying of a

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mantle of Americanism across their contented bodies.

Recalcitrant to mass phenomena, the Latins offer poor soil to transplanted American life. The obstacle is individualism. Ferocious in Spain, anarchical in Italy, revolutionary in France, this individualism seems almost insuperable. Peoples with a keen sense for the sharper satisfaction of civilized living, conscious of past supremacy and possessing acute critical insight, must abhor standardization and mass anonymity. Quick to unite and fuse, they as readily fall asunder. Unconquerable in the occupations where taste and individual capacity must supplement industry, they become listless or rebellious under monotony. Modern industrial life is, for the under dogs, nothing if not monotonous. Americanization in Latin countries would appear to demand an almost complete renewal of the national genius. Such a phenomenon is rare.

More problematic are Poland and the Balkans. While the former boasts a past period of high civilization, the masses are surprisingly fresh. In both regions the long suppressed national consciousness is now blazing with essentially

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youthful intensity. Vitality and the belief in progress, both on the wane in Western Europe, are undiminished. Every Pole, Serb or Hungarian has faith in his own and his country's destiny. The absence of tradition makes them superior in a Europe whose traditions have become burdensome. It is no coincidence that Roumanian and Hungarian writers are so easily adapting themselves to world taste. In the period of technical and financial combinations now prevalent, there is a large place for those East European qualities former ages would have accounted defects. Therefore in many ways the future of these countries seems easier and more promising than that of the more civilized western ones. Americanism in Eastern Europe ought not to encounter very serious difficulties.

8

Americanism as understood by Europe is therefore not only probable but practically inevitable. But not Europe alone is to be asked to submit to it. Unless the signs are false or I read them badly, the entire civilized world is destined to be thus Americanized. And in this generaliza-

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tion I include not only South America and Asia but, should the process be sufficiently prolonged, Arab and black Africa as well.

For there nowhere exists a living, non-American culture capable of offering any serious resistance to the new forces. Africa through its backwardness and insupportable climate, Asia through its profoundly anchored traditions and monstrous inertia, have resisted European civilization in all but political fields with considerable success. But in the guise of industrial technique and democracy, under the name of Americanism, this civilization will break down past barriers and, so far as consciousness of oppression rouses the Asiatic and African peoples, be borrowed by them as the best arm to wield against their oppressors.

Furthermore, the world of wireless telephony and broadcasting, picture transmission and airplanes, is, under present conditions, too small for more than one civilization to exist at once. There may be nooks and impervious angles where penetration will be slow—"nature still has secret breeding places"—but distance and geographical mystery have been obliterated. National isolation, continental isolation, is a peevish child's

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dream. The unexplored has been restricted to the inter-planetary spaces and to the soul of man, and he who loathes or shrinks from the mechanical mass-life here called Americanism must take refuge in one of these so far inaccessible haunts or advocate general destruction. It is of course conceivable that Americanism will in the long run alienate so much that is ineradicable in human nature that the masses of men will arise and destroy it, and with it all civilization whatsoever. It is not immediately likely.

For Americanism is not incompatible with socialism of any type that could come to prevail in countries at present civilized. A Britain, a France, or a Germany that had "gone communist" would none the less continue to follow American industrial methods and cultivate and develop American amusements.

It is only questionable whether without the spur of material benefits, the organizing and externally progressive standards of such a society would not soon stagnate. Meanwhile, barring a world catastrophe, it would be inevitably Americanized. • •

It is for this reason that so many of the European

leaders have decided to cease chewing the cud of past culture and are trying to gulp down the new standards. The European and Asiatic masses are awaiting the expected material benefits open mouthed. But for refined representatives of a massive and imposing tradition, it is a bitter drink. Enthusiasm for quantity is so essentially childish that to share it requires a deliberate puerilizing of the adult mind. And though the age is not without its adequate problems and rewards, the new type of successful leader is often so nauseous to the developed character that entire renunciation seems preferable. Therefore many spirits are already taking refuge in that Gibraltar of consolation, the Roman Catholic Church, and more will do so. But the moment of the faltering spirit that would mark that Church's triumph, is still immensely remote.

9

Yet the Europeans who feel themselves hostile to industrialized democratic civilization, or who draw back from an economic struggle between the nations, possibly leading to wars of a more atrocious kind than hitherto practised, can per-

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haps find intellectual comfort in the thought that what Europe calls Americanism is the body and not the soul of American life. This soul, the result of several hundred years' comparative isolation and a mixing of all the European peoples with a broad strand of Negro blood and instincts, already possesses an intrinsic personality that distinguishes it from the soul of Europe. No great people ever denies its own soul. To be reborn as a twin brother of the United States, Europe would have to pass through a purgatorial process that is unthinkable. *Even as an American colony Europe would still be in spirit un-American.* For of the essential American ideas Europe as a whole possesses no single one.

These qualities are, in my opinion, English Liberty, or the spirit of free co-operation and compromise ; Right Will, or the belief that man can be moulded to any conceivable pattern and desire by proper thought and effort ; and Natural Equality—the feeling that despite external variation human beings are in some mysterious way equal in possessing the unquenchable spark that makes them men.

English liberty has never existed on the Euro-

pean continent and the development of the class system and the social split into conservative and labour interests are killing it in Great Britain. Socialism and English Liberty are incompatible, and the continent tends strongly towards socialism or dictatorship—alike in their negation of free compromise. Without English Liberty there can be no restraint to ruthless political and economic fanaticism ; the American system cannot support internecine fanaticism.

Right Will, that strange faith in human ability to achieve its every imagined success—of which the vital belief in human progress is but 'one important phase—exists to some extent in Eastern Europe, but is entirely absent from the overpopulated, history-ridden countries along the Atlantic.

Natural Equality is the credo of the European socialist, but the majority of non-socialist Europeans both scoff at it and fear it. It runs counter to tradition and human experience and bluntly stated as a fact, provokes the derision of the adult mind. To understand it mystically, as the American understands it, there must be added some such words as "before God". These

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words European rationalism has progressed too far to accept, and only a spiritual renewal could subdue mature rationalism. The Old Country moreover has far too large a bump of accumulated experience ever to believe that men are born "neutral protoplasm" whose shaping is a matter of environment and chance. With the consequence that Natural Equality, through a European conception, could only become authoritative in Europe through the triumph of socialism.

10

Centuries ago the spirit of economic adventure drove thousands of bold Europeans westward across "no man's water" in the search for fortune and novel experience. "It was in the Rockies and beyond that the dreams of Walter Raleigh and John Smith's companions of the seventeenth century were finally realized." But in the United States this spirit did not die with the winning of the west, but remained in the descendants of the first daring Europeans and those who came into the land they civilized. That it could so remain was due to the stimulant of riches of a thousand sorts, above, upon and in the

earth, all waiting to be realized. American life has tended to allow free scope to this spirit, so greatly fertile in material and even intellectual results. Therefore the adventure of getting rich has had for America almost the formative value of an idea, and though it will wane with exhaustion of hidden wealth, while it lasts it must seem a taunt to Europe. For of all social conceptions it is the one the European masses seek most earnestly to stamp out. Europe has no such intoxicating period of rapid enrichment behind it, but a class struggle. Socialism and Economic Adventure are enemies. Now adherence to socialism can mean the lofty desire of suppressing economic struggle in order to release energy for activity in other, nobler fields. Or it can mean the high ethical renunciation of individual well-being except as it can be diffused among the masses—the refusal to outstrip one's fellows in the benefits of the world. But usually it means neither of these, but rather a somewhat weary liking for gregarious warmth sharpened by a kind of jealousy. A nation of saints might well sacrifice material adventure to human brotherhood, a people of geniuses scorn material benefits

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for enhanced powers of creation in aesthetic or intellectual spheres. A few high-minded individuals might agree that mass achievement more than compensates for individual penury. But the peoples of Europe are neither saints nor geniuses and their high-mindedness is, to say the least, sporadic. Therefore it is a fair inference that the European socialists, who seem likely to increase, will so successfully oppose the Spirit of Economic Adventure as to save their peoples from it.

The United States are no more saintly or high-minded or gifted than Europe ; they are simply different.

II

Essentially, therefore, Europe will not be Americanized. Externally, Americanization follows in the line of Europe's normal development and can hardly be staved off. This outward Americanism is indeed the form in which Euro-American civilization will conquer the earth. And though the period be " American ", the epoch is still " European ". The United States may play the dominant rôle, but the position of cultured Greece even in Roman antiquity was any-

thing but contemptible. Except to people born out of their time, the present and future of Europe need not be dark. Industrial civilization is both levelling and monotonous, but the prospects of an age of scientific business and social experiment are sufficiently fascinating to engage most curious minds. It is possible that so gifted a continent as Europe will, once it accepts the inevitable, find ways of compensating for American natural advantages by numbers and sheer genius. A politically or economically united Europe could set a fast pace for the United States and play a giant's part in spreading the new technique to Asia and Africa, or even combine with North America in defence against them. The immediate future holds extraordinary problems. The destiny of South America in the coming centuries is anything but clear. A vast Latin-American revival could upset the finest calculations. Australia may become the stronghold of the English-speaking peoples. Even more probable would seem the emergence of something novel from Russia, such as the creation of a vast Eurasian empire which, temporarily Americanized on the surface, might melt the Asiatic and the Slavic races together in

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some new and finer race. A communistic block stretching from Bristol to Vladivostock would wear "American" attire, but might prove fatal to the United States.

Yet the ties that bind Western Europe to North America are on both sides deeper than their manner of speaking might allow one to suppose. Now and for a long time to come those two regions are integral parts of a single civilization.

VI

THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED STATES

"For history is long, long, long. Shift and turn the combinations of the statements as we may, the problem of the future of America is in certain respects as dark as it is vast."

WALT WHITMAN.

I

AFTER a period of approximately 174 years (1609-1783) as a European colony, the United States of America have, in a considerably shorter period of independence, become the strongest and richest nation on the globe.

Foreign countries were somewhat abruptly made aware of this fact during the War when the trans-oceanic State suddenly leaped into the European lists and flung down, instead of a glove, a sermon, a Lewis gun and a sack of double-eagles. Once the War was over and settled to their satis-

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faction, the Allies invited the newcomer, respectfully but not without guile, to sit down in the inner council of the League of Nations and help them run the world. They were surprised and a little alarmed when he refused, and became publicly indignant when the American leaders, aware of how matters stood, began to proclaim their country's right to "assist mankind" in the ways it thought fit, and in these ways alone. Since then preponderant American power and prestige have become a commonplace. Historians and philosophers of reputation have mentally issued a new edition of "Who's Who among the Nations" and certain of them have announced that the future of mankind depends upon the action of America during the next half century.

Yet the opening of the American period in history happens to coincide with what one may call a spiritual crisis among the intellectual leaders of the Euro-American race, and of other races as well. For the present world appears to many to be progressively losing its soul. "Protestant revival in America, economic and psychological simplification in India (Ghandi), decadence and romanticism, Fascism and Neo-Catholicism in

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Europe—in principle all the same psychological symptoms of the lack of any way out, the absence of any practical and positive indications of the direction to be followed.” For a progressive decrease in spirit seems to have kept pace with gigantic material development.

While to the rulers and the majority adherents in the United States their country’s donning of the *toga virilis* seems a happy justification of the official optimism and a witness of the national wisdom, a minority of no great numerical strength but strong in mastery of the written and spoken word proclaims American predominance to be unmeaning or disastrous, since America, new as it is, has already gone wrong.

Dissent is no new thing in the United States. From the very beginning there have always been minor prophets prophesying doom if this or that favourite hobby be not backed by the majority. But the presence of a vociferous if heterogeneous group, including popular writers and prosperous citizens, who view their country with the eyes of native malcontents and foreign critics, brings to light the disturbing fact that American life does not seem to be satisfying a large number of

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inhabitants. People with leisure find America dull ; democrats complain of plutocracy ; discontented workers charge it with injustice ; unsuccessful burghers of the older stocks denounce it as increasingly foreign and Jewish ; old-fashioned Puritans name it godless ; cynics label it “ boob-and-boss ” rule ; artists with unsatisfied hopes pronounce it unproductive ; intellectuals sneer at it as uncivilized ; philosophers with ideals find it soulless. One or two historians of imagination sum up all the other complaints by proclaiming it Roman. And thereby, at the very moment of their glory, orthodox Americans are challenged to view their failures and achievements objectively, in terms of human history. Clearly the period of perfect confidence in world progress and America's heaven-appointed station at its head, is ending.

2

Nearly all observers make much of the difference between the United States and Europe. In the first years of the nineteenth century, Perrin du Lac, a French traveller, was greatly impressed by the way the Americans of that day did everything

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differently from Europeans. In my own opinion, there exist in the American soul certain basic qualities which can probably never be communicated to other peoples. A witty Austrian, Arthur Rundt, writer and artist at the same time, has published a delightful book to demonstrate that "America is different". A wise German, Leopold Ziegler, credits our country with an Atlantic or European face, and a Pacific or truly American one. André Siegfried speaks of our "completely original society". "a system independent of Europe". Which may be narrowly true. Yet Europe is anything but independent of the United States. The waves of power are simply running the other way.

In the broader frame of history, America and Europe are parts of the same system. If we take, not the country or the continent, but the civilization as the historical unit, it is clear that until recently, the centre would have been Europe, even had America been settled centuries earlier. At present European civilization has to be rebaptized Euro-American simply because at this period the qualities America possesses supremely, further the general development more successfully than

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those of the mother countries. The differences between the two continents are largely a matter of chronology.

For centuries to come Europe and the United States will continue to be parts of a single system whose essential unity and nature will be unmodified by the shift in the centre of gravity.

In the light of this fact, it is impossible to escape a comparison : the external Americanizing of Europe is historically no more and no less than the Romanizing of the Mediterranean world some 2000 years ago. Greece never became Roman : Europe will not be inwardly Americanized. But as Rome embodied the development of the classical ideal to completion and decline, so the United States are Euro-American civilization in its latest phase.

3

Evidence to support the thesis is plentiful. The more one investigates, the further the resemblance goes. At present I have reached the conclusion that nearly all the qualities, limitations, tendencies and features of contemporary America

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were present in Roman Italy sometime in the second century B.C.

With us, as in Rome, business is the essence of politics and life is organized for promoting the commonwealth, the *res publica*, as the business leaders conceive it. Comfort and hygiene are the highest ideals. It is sometimes forgotten that until fairly recently no communications in the world were so good or so rapid as they had been under Roman rule. Roman houses and tenements were often intramurally heated, a luxury we have not yet adopted. Roman hygiene in keeping the Campagna healthful and draining the Pontine marshes, Roman hydraulics in the aqueducts, Roman architecture in the vast baths and palaces, coliseums and bridges, arouse wonder from age to age. Roman roads have outlasted all highways built since their day.

The attitude of the Roman traveller in Greece must have been similar to the indulgent superiority of the American tourist in Europe : both peoples distrusted foreigners in spite of considerable familiarity with them. Neither had any respect for systematic philosophy, or intellectuals, or any but the national past ; both preferred to work

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out results in hard practice and judge according to good sense and personal experience. Rome anticipated the Anglo-American tendency toward successful empiricism in politics and conquered peoples to "civilize" them.

In Rome after Tiberius Gracchus there was considerable advance toward democracy, and in both countries the entire population received the franchise, with similar results. With this democracy, money power and imperialism went hand in hand. Contemporary Americans often forget that their early statesmen were vividly conscious of the "vast empire" afforded by the American continent. As early as 1860 William H. Seward was dreaming of a further American empire in Asia, and a modern empire is actually being realized, under commercial and military pressure, around the Caribbean.

In Rome the price of empire was several temporary and a finally permanent dictatorship, with the men of violence assisted by the men of money. The Roman peace at home and abroad meant the sacrifice of many values the masses of Americans still prize to-day. This phase seems to have been reached in certain European countries and

there are many signs that America may be moving in the same direction. Perhaps it was the thought of such a change that led an English couple to dedicate a volume "to the dying race of real Americans".

With the arm of modern banking and industrial machinery in their hands, our own aspirants to dictatorial powers seek financial rather than armed conquest ; the result is nearly the same. Under pluto-democracy there was in Rome a marked tendency toward standardization, though the absence of machine production made the fact less salient. Significantly enough, Charles and Mary Beard justify American standardization on the ground that "all previous societies have been standardized at some level of poverty or wealth".

Equally Roman is our tendency to level down by denying the requisites of existence to most of the things the masses do not consider important. In Euro-American society democracy has been concomitant with a fearful loss in the richness of aesthetic and intellectual life. Though it has not yet justified the fears of one of the eighteenth-century founders of the United States that it would mean the sweeping away of "reason, com-

mon sense, talents and virtue", democracy has accepted low standards in right living and taste. The average may be higher than in pre-democratic Europe, but the finer things are dwarfed. The democratic Beards express the belief that "America of the machine age offered material substance for the life of the mind more varied and more lucrative, both relatively and absolutely, than any nation that has flourished since the beginnings of civilization in the Nile Valley". Which may be exact if one puts the accent on the words "material" and "lucrative". Doubtless Rome offered more "material substance" to the intellect than Greece, yet Rome produced no original thinker of worth after Lucretius. Nor does the abundance of this "material substance" change the fact that actually in America and increasingly in Europe, the mental life of thousands who ought to be the source and guardian of culture is infinitely poorer, more puerile, more materialistic and less productive than the apparent possibilities of the age would justify or than many past nations have produced from less.

To be sure, there are symptoms in our society of a break away from inner uniformity and some

foreign visitors even think that variation in America is beginning at the moment that it is declining in Europe. Even if this be true—and I doubt it—individual variation is not the same as mental productivity, although the former is usually the condition of the latter. Florence did not wait for great wealth to produce geniuses. Contemporary America is hardly congenial to cultured men save as a spectacle and a hope. A civilization is growing there, but not organically—not from the ground up, as Whitman and Thoreau had hoped, but from above down. It is our rich men who, having exhausted the thrills of the search for money and power, are turning to fields of philosophy and art. There is no doubt but that in this sense our millionaires are doing us good.

The position of women in the United States cannot but attract the attention of all students of Roman history. At a certain point old Roman society began to show symptoms of a rupture with traditions very similar to the one now accomplished in America. The women of Greece never achieved “emancipation”. But the position of the Roman matron changed in a way

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that has impressed historians, some of whom were even foolish enough to attribute Rome's later downfall to it. This emancipation, this emergence of women from the home and their participation in the public life not only of pleasure but of politics and business, was in my opinion more the work of rationalism in freeing the society from a broken tradition than the sign of any real decay of virtue or common sense. But it ought to interest all who see in the American equality of the sexes a sure sign that mankind has finally emerged from age-long darkness into dazzling sunshine, to realize that, on a smaller scale, it occurred before. The downfall of the Roman Empire was none the less sure.

Nearly all foreigners and a few Americans believe that in many matters the United States are now largely controlled by feminine influence.

As the Beards put it :

“ Having the means to buy and to command, women became powerful arbiters in all matters of taste, ~~moral~~s and thinking. In short they called the tunes to which captains of industry, men of

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letters, educators and artists now practically danced."

The cynic cannot but be reminded of Cato's complaint: "All men rule over women, we Romans rule over all men, and our wives rule over us."

In aggressive societies, like the Roman and the American, the men are immersed in business or politics or sport and tend to leave to women whole fields, such as art, religion, fashion and entertainment. It can hardly be otherwise, and perhaps the creative achievements of emancipated American women in these fields will be greater than they were in Rome.

Old Roman religion in its moral aspects seems to have been very like American Puritanism. There was the same simplicity, the same cult of the home, the same strictness in sexual matters. And under the stress of money and democracy and contact with foreigners both religions broke down despite the exhortations of their adherents that change in this respect would mean the alienation of the gods, moral turpitude and national decay.

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I do not know whether the Roman women were responsible for keeping up the Oriental religions, the cults of Isis and Jupiter Apis, the Gnostic and other esoteric doctrines, in the imperial capital, but the emancipation of the sex and the flowering of these un-Roman churches seem to have coincided. In the United States the same phenomenon can be studied on a larger scale. The advertisement columns of a metropolitan Sunday newspaper generally announce scores of talks and gatherings based on most of the weird cults that the world has ever known, varying from the numerous and difficult branches of late Hindu metaphysics to strange health cults, mystical ways of initiation and humanitarianism. They are mostly attended by women. That this foliage of heterodoxy should follow the breakdown of the old established religions in both societies at approximately the same stage in their development is no coincidence.

No one who has admired the vast ruins of the Roman public baths and marvelled at the statues of unaesthetic gladiators in the museums will doubt that the Romans were a peculiarly clean people and great admirers of athletic prowess.

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In the modern, as in the classic civilization, these enthusiasms exist and are easily communicated to neighbouring peoples as they come under the metropolitan influence, resulting in a rich growth of bath tubs, swimming pools, gymnasiums, stadiums and championships.

4

Is America then to run the old Roman course from democracy to Caesarism, from Caesarism to open empire, and from empire to downfall and decay? Is there no hope of an Athenian age of culture, no possibility that men from Vermont and Idaho will conceive poems and buildings to equal *Oedipus Rex* and the Parthenon? Can we not hope for the establishment of democracy and (relative) brotherhood, for the birth of new prophets, of a new interpretation of religion reconciling ideals and human reason within a society that guarantees material comfort and scientific assistance to all? These are the questions those would like answered who love their country to the point of preferring her downfall to her ignominy.

There is no scientific answer, no mathematical

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proof of future development. But even to hazard an intelligent guess requires a definition of attitude toward the idea of human progress. Now what is meant by this might be defined as biological progress : it is not enough that individuals should develop in wisdom and virtue from youth to old age, or that the collective knowledge and power of the human race continue to accumulate with the centuries. Real progress, if it is to mean anything, implies that with the passing of the generations men and women with a larger endowment of health, heart, brain and insight are born into a better world. In human history such an idea was late-conceived and revolutionary. Since its inception and written formulation, philosophies of history (and everybody, consciously or not, has one) divide into two sorts : those that deny or doubt progress and those to whom it constitutes the meaning of life.

The older religions, whose followers are still numbered by the hundreds of millions, lay emphasis upon the individual. To the Buddhist, life is itself the evil and man's aim is history's extinction. To the Roman Catholic, the important matter is the saving of individual souls ; any

merely historical circumstance is good or bad as it furthers or retards this vital achievement. History is therefore a secondary matter. Really important is hagiography.

Doctrinaire pessimists deny progress and usually base their belief on history. This is not difficult. "Broadly speaking, an impartial judge of human history is ever tempted to view it as at bottom nothing but the aimless, unending and sickening record of human crime and folly." Rational agnostics are generally more cautious. Progress, they reckon, cannot be proved. Whatever his material triumphs, man's moral nature seems to have undergone no improvement since the Pyramids. Human history reveals the steady repetition of egotistic and generally evil deeds. As to whence or whither, it points no clue.

Equally opposed to the general idea of progress is the Law of Civilization propounded by Spengler and developed in his impressive masterpiece, *The Decline of the West*.¹

Spengler grants that history repeats itself, but not as the agnostics imagine. "Civilization" is

¹ Oswald Spengler: *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, two large volumes. Translated into English.

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a modern myth. Rather there are a series of civilizations, each essentially, though not always physically, isolated from the others, arising in separate places, following no mathematical but an organic cycle from birth through maturity to decline and death or atrophy, each the incarnation of some specific way of grasping and interpreting life. Spengler believes that the records available already show the existence of nine of these within the known period. Within each civilization there is progress, if it can be called such, much like the development of a human being from birth to burial, each stage bringing forth certain fruits which in turn are superseded by others carrying on the fundamental vision of life that animates the whole and differentiates it from all the other civilizations.

Thanks to this Law, Spengler has succeeded in bringing order out of the agnostic's chaos, in accounting for regressions, lapses, petrified states like China before the ferment of new ideas began working there, and generally, in reconciling the obvious progress of certain societies over given periods with the failure of the whole of history to present any clear development at all.

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The cycle of each civilization is fixed in duration at approximately fourteen hundred years. The political development as type is described by Spengler's disciples, Goddard and Gibbons,¹ as follows :

“ After a period of some centuries the civilization proper begins with a feudal age. After about 200–300 years, and overlapping feudalism to some extent, comes the rise of pure aristocracy. During a further 200 years the aristocracy gives place to oligarchy, and about 500 years after the beginning the true nobility decays. With their decay the ‘ plebs ’ (middle class) begin to be of political importance. For a brief period there is a perfection such as can only be felt, not described. But perfection cannot last and ultimately the *tiers état* becomes identical with the nation ; the nation itself does not last long as the form of government, and with the growth of the fourth class (the proletariat) has to give way to a period of disorder where at first there is some apparent progress toward real democracy, but the people are later used by the great men

¹ *Civilization or Civilizations*, Constable. London, 1926. I have slightly abbreviated the text quoted.

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simply for their own ends. Such forms of power we call Caesarism (dictatorship). As the last stage of all an empire arises and there is an increasing tendency to rigid classification of position and function and with it to material prosperity. After another 200 years the civilization sinks back into the form in which it arose, feudal, amorphous, but dead ! ”

Along the line of its indwelling personality, each civilization brings forth *with plant-like precision* achievements in fields corresponding to the stage of its organic development. Outside the possibilities or off the line of their particular civilization and moment, mortals are powerless to produce anything of value. Art, religion, philosophy, science, learning, develop as the appropriate season appears and droop as it passes, according to causes inherent in the being of the world and inscrutable to human understanding.

This is not the eternal return of Nietzsche, whereby, in an immense but recurring number of years, a being identical with myself will again be seated at the same desk in the same room,

hammering out the same words on the identical typewriter—a view bitterly evoked by Anatole France at the close of the *Island of Penguins*. Nor does it exclude the “individual progress” of reincarnating souls according to the Vedanta and modern Theosophy. Spengler himself rather scoffs at progress as imagined by men to-day, and it is evident he either disbelieves in it altogether or considers it lies outside our scope.

Absolutely opposed to these views and this negation of progress is the view of history as a human adventure “from the amoeba to the stars”, as evolved by certain philosophers, taken over and confirmed by the scientists, and given exciting expression in H. G. Wells’ *Outline of History*. First expressed by the French priest, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, this idea was already influential in the eighteenth century and was, in a curious form, popularized by Hegel, since whom it has become the common property of all not temperamentally refractory to it or bound to some definite religion. Without it the social utopias and mechanical transformations of the nineteenth century would hardly have been possible. It is to-day the faith of most intellectual leaders

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and of the vast masses in America and therefore needs no further description.

Between two such fundamental views harmony is difficult. Yet any historical forecast must chime with the one that is favoured. If indefinite progress, however slow, be possible, no hope for humanity is too wild, no dream too fantastic. If progress be limited to the single perishable civilization, or be an illusion ; or if life be too obscure for us and essentially meaningless ; then good sense consists in refusal to worry and the attempt to meet difficulties as they arise and to solve them where possible, with the means to hand.

5

My philosophy of history is as follows :

History as it is known to me does not present the picture of definite, regular progress that it does to our modern reformers and progressives. In the world of thought I see the accumulated intellectual riches of ages but small evidence of greater individual brain capacity. Spiritual insight seems to me no more frequent than in antiquity. • On the moral side little has changed since the book of Ptah-Hotep was written five or

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six thousand years ago. Mankind has (in the last century) gained in health, cleanliness and the control of external forces, and has paid for this advance by loss in other fields. As one who enjoys the colour of life I am no Buddhist and the Buddhist problem does not immediately concern me. Nor can I believe with the Catholics in the exclusive value of the individual soul drama. Future life impresses me as no more important than the one I am living. Moreover, in the philosophy of Spengler I think to have found the key to much that was closed to me. Therefore I accept the Law of Civilization as the best historical hypothesis available and use it to corroborate my empirical opinion that modern culture, like all its predecessors, is developing steadily towards "old age".

At the same time, contemporary science is difficult to reconcile with disbelief in all progress. Compared with the period covered by its researches, the six or seven thousand years about which something is historically known are insignificant. Though historical records give small evidence of moral or intellectual development in the individual, this fact demonstrates only that

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progress is slow, not that there is none. Therefore I applaud the formula of Bertrand Russell : “ The movement of human society, viewed throughout the period known to history, is partly cyclic, partly progressive ; it resembles a tune played over and over again, but each time louder and with a fuller orchestration than before ”, and, I would add, in a different key. The figure of history as it presents itself to me is therefore that of an inclined but on the whole upward tending spiral.

6

There is nothing abnormal in the condition of the United States. The American qualities and defects fit into the Law of Civilization with almost glovelike smoothness. Spengler wrote most of his great work during the War, at a time few foresaw the overweening preponderance the United States were soon to exert. Modified by belief in slow but persistent progress from culture cycle to culture cycle—the fuller orchestration of Russell—the present status of the United States seems to illustrate the theory with almost disconcerting accuracy.

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According to Spengler, we now live in approximately the year 1027 of Euro-American civilization. The period between 900 and 1100 (A.D. 1800–2000) is defined as one of national wars, finance, socialism, materialism, religious confusion, pessimism and scepticism. Strictly artistic and religious periods lie behind us and nationalism is waning under the influence of democracy (socialism) and capitalism. But pure science progresses joyfully for another century and the applied sciences (technique) for at least two centuries more. Democracy and socialism may continue to grow during the entire lifetime of those born to-day. But by the date of their death, about A.D. 2000, democracy will have lost real power. Imperialistic dictators or financiers will be gaining control of most of the globe—a prospect that should warm the heart of many of our contemporary bankers and admirals.

The period of open or veiled attempts at dictatorship will last about a century and be followed by a real empire, which, exercising authority over the entire civilized area (in our case, the world), will keep the new peace, which the future will perhaps call the *pax americana*. After 200 years

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more, decay will be so pronounced that the whole will crumble and the remains will either harden into essentially lifeless fragments (China and India before the latest revival) or be absorbed by some younger civilization.

7

From the moment it entered history the United States have been keeping time with Spengler's periodicity. There is therefore good reason for supposing they will continue to do so. Finance and democracy, technique and science are supreme. The United States are their champion, not their opponent, and on this account lead the world.

To begin with, the past is the past : Puritanism and the " little America " of the thirties will never return. The Ku Kluxers and their successors may Cato it about the country and lay about them with legislation and the tar brush, but any results they may achieve will be transitory. Protestantism opened the way to ethical rationalism and has been superseded by it. Irrational natures will continue to seek exotic and mystical cults, whose power will increase. Catholicism has a

future, because Catholicism is the refuge of the disillusioned. As the machine age swings by, with its hard negation of the old intimacy and freedom, there will be many to seek that maternal consolation an ever more standardized and impersonal world refuses.

With the multiplication of technical and administrative problems, with the foliation of physics, chemistry, biology, hygiene and medicine, with the increase of cities to monstrous aggregations housing tens of millions of people in three-storied streets and fifty-storied offices, all of whom must be fed, there will be less personal liberty, not more. *Laissez-faire* and the old freedom to walk and talk as one likes will vanish, at least from the chief centres, though they may long linger in outlying nooks for the solace of over-regimented men. The new rulers will possess more power over men's lives than the despots dreamed of. Whether as socialist commissars or as capitalists, the leaders will wield almost dictatorial might and spread the civilization ever more widely. Political opposition will be crushed by as relentless (though possibly less painful) means as ever before. Anonymity and stan-

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dardization will have "normalized" away all but inner distinction. Outwardly identical human beings will be individual in their own right or not at all.

Imperialism will hold sway. There will be wars : wars to force unwilling yellow or black or even white men to hold by the dominant standards. It is not unlikely that sooner or later a nearly world-wide state wielding military as well as economic weapons will arise to keep the world safe for machinery and a somewhat humdrum prosperity. For prosperity will rather increase than diminish. It is safe to say that a century from now the masses may live better than they ever have.

Not lack of shelter but homelessness will increase. The new society will be incredibly mobile and cosmopolitan and masses of men will be at home in three continents. Adventurers of all nations and colours will flock to the giant metropolises and the half-educated, unscrupulous opportunist will wax fat. On the other hand, private life will gain somewhat in elasticity. There will be still looser family and marriage bonds and more casual relations between the

sexes, whereby sex will lose and not gain in importance. Women will keep their position beside the men, but sex acerbity will have passed. There will be numerous attempts to check one or more of these tendencies. Partially successful reforms will halt the clock for a moment and be brushed aside by the hurrying hands. Abnormality of any quality will, if tactful, find easy refuge beneath the machine-smooth surface.

Rationalism will extend to psychology and the new discoveries may tend to justify mysticism as inherent and valuable. But as a fact, not as an emotion or a theory.

Saddest of all, the American intellectuals and artists will hope in vain for a return to an epoch favourable to them. The new period will bring forth no centrifugal styles save the strictly utilitarian (and sometimes beautiful) spirit of technique. Architecture and engineering will thrive as never before, but their triumphs will be along lines of size and ingenuity rather than of beauty. Pictorial art will be a fad for millionaire collectors or posters illustrating ideas for the multitude. Music may increase for the masses and for highly educated connoisseurs ; it will not

mean what Mozart meant. Only prose literature, especially critical, biographical or historical literature, may flourish exceedingly. History should reach unimagined accuracy and extension. All imaginable museums will provide material. Perhaps for the first time mankind will succeed in reconstructing a fairly complete picture of the latest few thousand years. Some men will be wiser, if not more creative. For in the spiritual realms people will live on their capital.

Although no new Athens will arise, a new Babylon may shine under the searchlights of a thousand winged conveyances. In America are millions of still half primitive Africans and as many Indians as were here when Columbus stepped ashore from the *Santa Maria*. Perhaps they may sow seeds whose flowers will give brighter colour to the larger uniform ferment of scientific, business, industrial and social life, and the result will be a lustrous Augustan age of silvered culture.

This prediction does not fit American optimism or justify the general faith in indefinite rectilinear progress. • Nor is this future what the American founders, or the idealists of later years, have

dreamed. But there is time : after all, the earth is young. And it is something to lead mankind in the first world-wide civilization that has ever been.

The United States as a more powerful, more humane, more educated, more democratic and more glorious Rome—this is my prediction.

8

Yet what undertaking so wretched as prophecy !

The likeness between Rome and the United States cannot be pushed too far. In making my forecast I have been assuming that the differences between our civilization and its predecessors might colour but could not deflect the stream. These differences are chiefly occasioned by the size and type of civilization and the strictly psychological characteristics of the two peoples.

The very universality of Euro-American civilization may preserve it from the weakness and dangers that have brought all past cultures to decay. Ours is the first world epoch. For the first time a single civilization seems likely to spread, however thinly, over the entire globe. For the first time men have attempted politically

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to organize the planet. Such universality creates an entirely new situation and may turn historical development in new directions.

We possess physical power to a degree no previous men have more than dreamed of. At the least it should prove sufficient to ward off those peripheral invasions that have sometimes brought to untimely end the empires of the past. Our cable and wireless bind the continents together, our airplanes overawe rebellious peoples. Knowledge of the past is ours and even, if we wish it, knowledge of the Law in accordance with which all previous civilizations seem to have fallen. It may prove possible to evade the Law by knowledge of the Law.

Both capitalism and democracy are stronger than anything Rome could show. Against the gold meshes of capital struggle the emotions of millions and millions of human beings who realize what they want. Education is more general than ever before. No one can say it will not arouse the masses to the value if not to the capacity of independent thought. It might enable them successfully to hold their own in the struggle for power. At the worst it offers a

compass by which they can be warned in time of the course steered by the rulers.

Not less important is the discovery of technical machinery and its application to industry. Though this increases the power of the State and the machinery owners over men's lives, the resulting wealth has, under the democratic urge, created a general prosperity and a degree of self consciousness that will make the workers slow to accept curtailment of their standards and privileges. At the same time, through the necessity of keeping up the consumption of the standardized wares poured from the factories, the capitalists are themselves forced to seek to maintain the general buying power as an indispensable condition to their own wealth. America cannot afford to treat its masses in the Roman manner ; America wastes goods but spares human beings. Our so-called proletariat pays for its bread and circuses, its chicken dinners and moving pictures and motor cars.

Another essential difference, also inherent in technical industry, is the presence of a large number of highly intelligent subordinates, not many of whom can ever be absorbed into the

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ruling plutocratic or official classes. Imperial Romans might drive their slaves to the fields and galleys that formed the sources of their wealth by a few armed guards. It is more difficult to force electrical experts, a chemical research staff or even journalists to do their best for a ruling order most of them have come to hate. When all is said, they are the class without whose willing co-operation a highly organized country cannot function.

Furthermore the degree of prosperity is so great that the number of those who could, if they desired, obtain both leisure and culture already threatens to bring about a transmutation in the conception of wealth. Where money is so abundant and easy to obtain its importance rather diminishes and the demands for the unhampered use of it in intellectual and cultural fields increases.

Then in origin the Roman and the American peoples were different. The Romans were an independent branch of the same race as the Greeks. America is a European colony. Therefore the European past lives within us, while the Romans had no past. The influx of Celtic,

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Teutonic, Iberian, Slavic, Oriental and African merchants, charlatans and slaves reached Rome at a later historical stage than our own immigrants and never became an integral part of the Roman people. Ours are being assimilated.

A further important difference lies, in my opinion, in the fundamental Christian tenets of brotherhood and humanity that the United States inherited from Europe and have kept reasonably fresh. These teachings have proved powerful enough to carry over from a pre-European civilization and are deeply rooted in the general consciousness. On their account alone Euro-American civilization has a more broadly human and merciful attitude toward human suffering than previous cultures. Brutalization along Roman lines may of course lead to the transformation of Negro burnings, night attacks on recalcitrant social radicals and electrocutions into public spectacles. But it is not likely, for the ideal of brotherhood has taken strong hold of the human imagination. Though it requires the seating of what the psychoanalysts call the "brother complex" on the throne of the "father" (the principle of authority), its influence, when

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assisted by scientific sociology and vast material means, would seem to guarantee us against the complete dominion of dictatorial capital.

Our specific American ideas are none too favourable to unlimited money or despotic rule. English Liberty insists on the free agreement of free men. Right Will makes people unreasonably strong. For the first time the masses are seriously studying concentration and how to will. So long as we will to be free we cannot easily be enticed into bondage by the siren calls of the paid flautists of financial imperialism.

Or again, Spengler may be wrong. The Law of Civilization may turn out to be an ingenious illusion, patterned on a merely accidental similarity between past cultures. Our resemblance to Rome may prove transient. The adherents of indefinite progress may find their belief justified by coming events, and the great Human Adventure go sweeping smoothly on to ever higher levels.

A civil or intercontinental war, ten times as destructive as the recent war in Europe, may half efface educated humanity and thereby shuffle up the cards of possession for a new deal.

Yet should our civilization prove as mortal as our bodies, and Spengler be as right as I fear he is, not all that we have hoped and striven for will be lost. Some of it, enclosed in the innermost spirit that cannot perish, will be found and utilized by men of some future cycle when the time is ripe. "After me cometh a builder"—after Euro-American civilization others will arise, each retracing the development of its predecessors, but bigger, bolder, freer. A new civilization has sometimes budded within the very heart of the old, as Byzantine-Arabian culture took root within Romanized Asia and in Rome itself. To-day the most probable site for such a burgeoning seems Russia, that strange tortured country that Peter the Great failed to westernize and that may even now, through or in spite of communist rule, be biding its time for the great awakening. But there is a chance for the United States: not in my opinion for the eastern strongholds of Europeanism and industry, but for the west, the "Pacific face".⁴ Experts speak of evidence of a new race in California and

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the easterner in that region feels a different mental as well as physical atmosphere. Perhaps there is something more than thick-headedness in the suspicion of our masses towards European culture, though it looks like the indolence of the Roman mob.

And finally, should our country be swept forward even into a development we dread or despise, there is within most Anglo-Saxons, as Santayana noted, "the feeling that our labours, even when they end in failure, contribute to some ulterior achievement in which it is well they should be submerged". After all, within every man are numerous qualities and ideals that are mutually exclusive, and cannot all come to fruition at the same time. Justice and mercy, tradition and reason, prudence and daring, humility and power, spontaneous handicraft and machine technique, youth and age—all are good, but no individual and no people can ever realize all of them at once.

Our American task is to accept our time and within the limits of its possibilities, to express ourselves as fully and ideally as our powers permit. If we do this, frankly and without

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hypocrisy, we shall at least secure passage through the pallid vestibule of hell and accept the future without flinching. This was the way of the pioneers who made our country and should be our inheritance. This was the Roman way and we would not be less than Romans.

THE END

they go in and out of motion—then you remember the town and you understand how important it is that steel people should have nice houses, parks, playtime, freedom from all unnecessary anxiety.

You remember the twins and make a relation. If, in the act of putting a million-dollar piece of mechanical equipment into a motion, a man were to be seized with a panic about his twins or by a bitter reflection on the wretchedness of their surroundings, he might jam the works quite without meaning to do it. Or if he had meant to do it, you would never be able to prove it. The hand slipped—that was all.

Leave out the slip. There is no visible accident. There is only the difference between a hand that is willing, always pressing for the optimum result, and a hand that is slack or heavy because the mind behind it is sullen, cares nothing for the ideal output, or means deliberately to retard production in order to keep more men on the job. When by means of mechanical equipment you have multiplied the power of the hand a million times, so you have multiplied this difference a million times, and it becomes enormous.

The more your investment is in machines, the greater your stake is in the man who touches them, in his general well-being, his manner of living, his conscious and unconscious attitudes. You see clearly what the head of the United States Steel Corporation means when he says the true problem of modern industry is how to gain the loyalty, the coöperation and the understanding of the individual man. Not men in general—the man. And there is new mean-

